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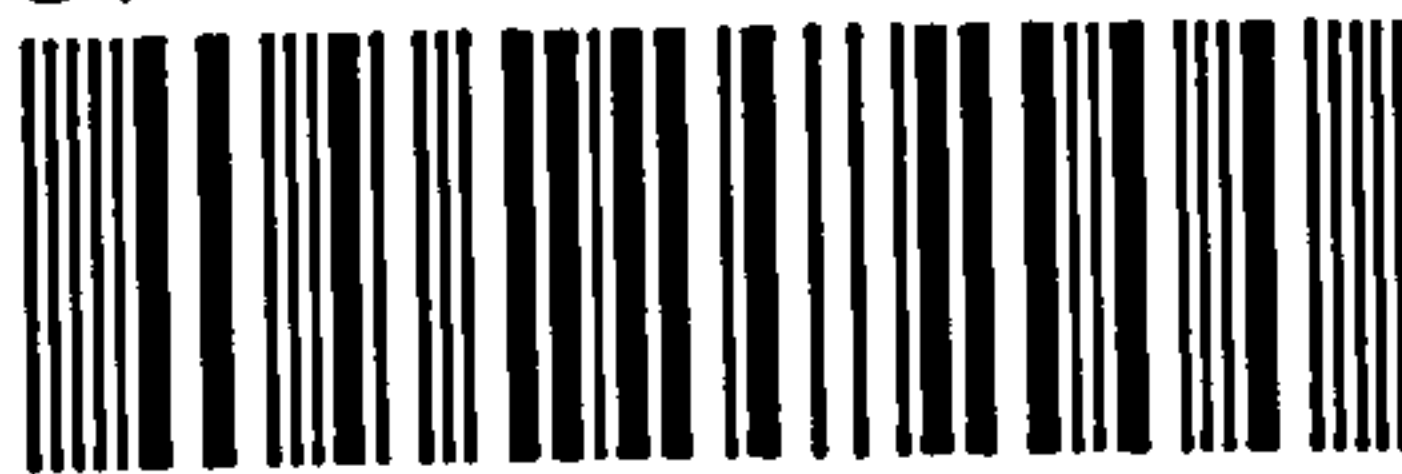
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The Performance of Identities in an International NGO in Child Welfare in China

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PhD Thesis

Faculty of Health & Social Care

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Abstract

This thesis is an investigation of the performance of identities in the social interactions that constitute an international non-governmental organisation (INGO). It examines how those involved in this kind of international-development activity shape what kinds of actors they are through the identity work that is entwined with representations of the organisation and what it is doing.

The thesis is based on data generated over four and a half months with an INGO working in the field of child welfare in China. Data was captured in fieldnotes, interview transcripts, organisational documents and other media such as a television programme and a promotional DVD. It is an ethnographic study that draws on discourse analysis and narrative analysis.

The study addresses the implications of how the problem the organisation seeks to address and the way it is addressing that problem are constructed, and of how relationships with others are depicted. The thesis argues that analysis of identity work at the micro level, which acknowledges the context driven and variable ways in which actors make sense of the organisation and its work, offers valuable insights into how the social practices that form an INGO unfold. This research adds to understandings of being an actor in international development, specifically in the field of child welfare in China. It identifies various tensions that have implications for policy and practice.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This research originated in an interest in the development of provision for children in state care in China, took a turn towards the role of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) in the changes in policy and practice in that area, and ultimately focused on how actors in this kind of international-development activity shape what they and their organisation are doing, and shape what kinds of actors they are in relation to others, through their identity work.

In the past two decades INGOs have undertaken to support the work of state child-welfare institutions in China. Considerable claims have been made about their contributions to recent developments in policy and practice for children in state care. For example, it is suggested that INGOs introduced the concept of 'foster care' to China (Shang 2002 p. 209), and it is suggested that NGOs, both domestic and international, are necessary for the survival needs of vulnerable children, such as those living in institutions (Nyland and Nyland 2005 p. 297).

INGOs and other 'foreigners' (see the discussion of 'foreign' later in this chapter) have gradually gained a presence in the field of child welfare, mainly since the 1990s, in the context of China's policy of 'reform and opening-up' (改革开放), which began in 1978. However, this presence has been gained against a backdrop of a much longer history of intervention in social welfare by people from outside China's borders. Some even claim that social work was introduced

to China in the early 20th century by missionaries, a claim relatively recently remade in an editorial in the well-established journal *International Social Work* (Chi 2005 p. 373).

The recent presence of INGOs in child welfare in China has also occurred in the context of accelerated processes of globalisation. These have contributed in complex ways to the development of provision for children in state care. For example, ideas and resources have been exchanged through the processes of international adoption (Dowling and Brown 2009). The nature of the influence of international actors in this more recent phase of activity is suggested by authors such as Dorow, who, in her global ethnography of transnational adoption between China and the United States, states:

Since the late 1990s, formal foster-care programs and other signs of professionalized Western micropractices of care in Chinese orphanages have become more routine, mediated by transnational facilitators, agency social workers, and various U.S. and European charitable organisations.

(Dorow 2006 p. 94)

Such claims about the influence of Euro-North American actors, especially INGOs, on provision for children in state care in China provide the backdrop for my research and the reason for its contemporary relevance. As I shall explain in this chapter, the early stages of my fieldwork emphasised how I could make a contribution to knowledge by focusing on the complexity in the ways in which an INGO goes about supporting child-welfare institutions. My thesis will contribute to more diverse understandings of being an actor in international development, specifically in the field of child welfare in China. It will do this by examining the performances of identities that are entwined with

how the activities of INGOs unfold and with how people working in INGOs make sense of the processes around the apparent introduction, indicated in the claims mentioned above, of concepts from elsewhere.

The data which form the basis for this thesis were generated in the period from mid-February to the end of June 2008, with an INGO I refer to as Xorg, which was working in the field of child welfare in China. This first chapter will tell the story of how my research objectives developed as I began my study of Xorg. It will outline the environment in which INGOs working in child welfare in China operate; it will discuss how my presence in Xorg was set up; and it will describe the metamorphosis of my research questions during the first part of my fieldwork, while illustrating key points in the development of my theoretical and methodological approach to answering them. Firstly, I shall introduce relevant elements of my own biography and explain how I am framing the thesis.

The researcher

My decision to undertake doctoral research in the broad area of the development of provision for children in state care in China was a result of my desire to bring together my curiosity about China and my interest in child welfare. As I began my doctoral programme, my disciplinary background was in Chinese studies and social and political sciences, which I had studied for my undergraduate degree, and in social policy, which I had studied for my master's degree. I had addressed some 'cross-cultural' issues in research while

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producing my master's dissertation, which addressed the conflict within government rhetoric and policy relating to refugees in the UK by examining experiences of training.

In between my undergraduate and master's degrees, and for several years after my master's degree, I worked in research and administration in the not-for-profit sector in the UK. This employment included research work for two children's charities in the UK, on projects concerned with service provision in the areas of the mental health of children and young people and foster care. One project investigated access to mental health services for young people from ethnic minority backgrounds and the other focused on foster carer recruitment.

I responded to the Open University's advertisement of a doctoral studentship to focus on globalisation and international adoption from China to the UK. I was awarded the studentship and spent the first year of my doctoral studies exploring the relationships between different aspects of the development of provision for children in state care in China, including international adoption. I was keen to generate data in China and the development of my research focus will be discussed later in this chapter.

What I wish to acknowledge here is that as I began this research, I was influenced by cultural messages from the UK about elements of care, particularly in regard to children in state care, which related to features of provision in the UK. In addition, although I was not a novice in terms of my

knowledge of China, owing to my previous studies, and also previous travel in China, I approached the research from my own individual outlook on Chinese culture and society. I shall be reflexive in the analysis of my data, which is discussed further in Chapter Three, and I shall also explore the construction of culture in the empirical chapters.

Framing the thesis

In this thesis I study an organisation operating in the field of child welfare in China. What a child is, and the meaning of childhood, depend on the cultural setting. As is shown by reviews of the anthropological literature on childhood (LeVine and New 2008; Montgomery 2008), there are wide-ranging differences in the way children live within cultures and between societies. Sociological approaches to childhood have problematised the idea of the child, considering the child to be socially constituted, and have moved away from the idea of a universal childhood to an examination of the social construction of different childhoods (James and Prout 1997).

As will be explained in Chapter Two, the theoretical framework for this thesis is based on the idea of the social construction of reality. I wish to acknowledge here the diversity in the ways that childhood is constructed in different cultural contexts. I understand childhood to be a stage of the life course, which has some basic common patterns for children in different cultural contexts, but more importantly I understand how childhood is experienced, and how it is interpreted and understood, to be contingent on a range of socio-historical

cultural factors. Moreover, the multiple meanings of childhood are built from ideological concepts, and especially from ideas about children's needs that are important to adults (Holland 2004).

In line with my understanding of the child and childhood as socially constructed, I also understand children's well-being and child development to also be social and cultural constructs. Many studies have shown the importance of the cultural context in child development and the diversity of child development around the world. Each society or cultural community has distinctive ideas about age-related capacities for different activities, pathways of development, the definitions of stages of development, and the tasks and responsibilities that children are given at particular ages (LeVine and New 2008). In addition to necessitating the acknowledgment of this diversity, the understanding of childhood as socially constructed is important because the idea of childhood as one identity unconnected to the context, and the depiction of a universal childhood to explain the situation or experiences of particular children, are problematic for the provision of an adequate response to children in difficulty (O'Dell 2008).

Conceptualisations of the child are different in China to in other countries, and of course there is variation between subcultures within China. A psychological discourse around children's emotional needs has recently emerged in China, but this is different to psychological discourses of children's needs in the West (Naftali 2010). The emergence of discourses of children's rights in China (which

has been taking place more in urban than rural China) has a unique quality and those discourses draw on diverse and contradictory ideas of the child, which can be related to developing ideas about citizenship in contemporary China, to the interests of the Chinese government in increasing its legitimacy by presenting a more compassionate image in relation to childcare, as well as to ideas about children as autonomous (Naftali 2009).

I do not focus on the social construction of childhood in this thesis, due to the way my research question developed, which is explained later in this chapter. The central concern of this thesis is to investigate how people working in an INGO in child welfare in China shape what kinds of actors they are through performances of identities. In the early stages of my data generation this concern became the most prominent issue that I confronted in the field and therefore the most important focus for this thesis.

The core literature that I am addressing in the thesis, which is reviewed in Chapter Two, is that which relates to the creation of development projects through everyday performances in relationships, to the social interactions that constitute development projects and NGOs, and to the discursive construction of development work. I am applying social-constructionist theory to the subject of international-development activity by an NGO. In addition to reviewing this core literature in Chapter Two, later in this first chapter I draw on other bodies of literature to introduce the contextual circumstances for Xorg including the situation for INGOs operating in child welfare in China and the situation of

child welfare in China. I wish to acknowledge here the links that have been made between models of child development and models of economic development. It has been suggested that in both cases Euro-American standards of development have been presented to 'developing' countries and that, instead, it is necessary to question the cultural assumptions informing these models and to develop further an awareness of the influence of cultural diversity on development in different contexts (Burman 2008b).

The implication of framing the thesis in the above way, in relation to the existing literature, is that the findings and conclusions of the thesis address the interactions between different cultural messages about children and what is in their interests to a lesser extent than may be expected. While important arguments have been made for a consideration of how the processes of globalisation are shaping understandings of childhood (Finn, Nybell et al. 2009), the research question primarily addressed by the thesis does not lead to findings in that area. More emphasis is placed on the construction of the identities of the organisation studied and those working within it than on the construction of the identities of the children who the organisation's work is purported to benefit.

Nevertheless, part of what I shall do in the thesis, is to examine how children are represented in the course of the identity work performed by members of staff at Xorg. This examination will include the use of ideas relating to that of a universal childhood, including children's needs as self-evident, and will also

touch on other common representations of children including as victims, who are passive and dependent and need protection and rescuing, and as an investment for the future, who need to be helped to fulfil their potential.

What I shall also do in the thesis is to examine the construction of culture in my data. In relation to child development, Burman (2008a) argues that even when culture is considered, it is often 'an optional extra' and 'cross-cultural perspectives' (p. 69) on child development still assume it to be consistent between societies and focus only on particular aspects of difference such as plans for education. In this thesis I shall look at the construction of culture as an integral part of the identity work that is performed, however this will be mainly in relation to the way members of staff at the INGO I have called Xorg make sense of what they are doing and their place in the wider context of child welfare in China.

I shall examine literature relating to the performance and construction of identities, including the construction of culture, in Chapter Two. In the next section, I shall introduce the environment in which INGOs working in child welfare in China operate.

INGOs in child welfare in China: a depiction of the operational context

This section will outline some of the difficulties and complexities faced by INGOs working in the field of child welfare in China. INGOs working in this

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area are operating in a unique environment that affords opportunities but also many challenges. This section will paint a picture of the political context for INGOs in China and of the circumstances of children in state care, including the nature of child-welfare institutions and alternatives to institutional care, and notes the particularities of foster care in China and the development of professional social work in that country.

In this section I will draw on the academic literature and other background information, including my own experiences, in a slightly different way to that of my overall approach in subsequent chapters. Chapters Two and Three will explain the concern of my theoretical stance with representations and constructions of reality. Drawing on literature from other approaches that makes claims about the operational context for INGOs working in child welfare in China, and in particular accepting the findings of more realist studies at face value, raises epistemological concerns. In the field of child welfare in China there are also considerable practical obstacles to access for both researchers and INGOs themselves, and these obstacles make any depiction of the circumstances notably partial. In order to indicate key considerations when thinking about the context for Xorg's operations, however, in this chapter I will draw on what is suggested by more realist approaches.

INGOs in China

The impression given by the available literature is that neither domestic NGOs nor INGOs in China have the opportunity to operate freely and that at the same

time there is a lack of clear and consistent regulatory boundaries. NGOs of both types are controlled by the state largely on the basis of the level of political threat they present and the extent to which they could challenge the government. The context is one in which, among other strategies, some organisations are banned, some are turned into quasi-governmental organisations and some are watched under a strategy of 'no interference' (Xiaoguang and Heng 2008).

Nevertheless, INGOs have an opportunity to provide support and resources. It is suggested that the particular reasons for the Chinese governments' permitting foreign NGOs to operate include the need for service provision and education in areas of great lack, and the need for resources. Resources may include funding, foreign visits, technical advice and training (Tan 2008 pp. 217-8).

The opportunity to provide support and resources is depicted as constrained, however, by the nature of the registration procedures; by the relationship between INGO activity and the legitimacy of the Chinese government, which makes non-sensitive activities more likely to succeed; by the ways in which NGOs are dependent on the government; and by the state's historical and contemporary constructions of the 'foreigner'. I shall consider each of these in turn below.

There is little possibility of an organisation of significant size operating outside the formal registration procedures, although anecdotal evidence and some literature suggests that smaller organisations sometimes manage to establish themselves and go unregistered, either unbeknown to the authorities or with the authorities turning a blind eye, especially to those organisations that are not championing political agendas (Shang 2002 p. 209; Howell 2004 p. 11) . In the field of child welfare this includes small private residential institutions or private group-foster homes, where a group of children live with a set of foster parents. These informal homes may even have temporary contracts with the local authorities to care for children (Shang 2002 p. 209). I visited a private foster home that, I was told, was nominally run by a Chinese man who lived in the same compound while in practice it was run by an American couple with support from the United States. This arrangement had apparently allowed the home to continue operating. The home had received children from state child-welfare institutions. Other private foster homes run by foreigners had also been situated in the same compound and I was told that they had had to move due to trouble with the authorities. As I walked around the compound I could see the abandoned villas and discarded toys.

The procedures for acquiring legal status are different for Chinese NGOs and INGOs. My concern is with the procedures for INGOs, which are described as inconsistent, changeable and uncertain (Ma 2006). The occurrence of the Olympic Games in China in the same year as my fieldwork was an oft-cited reason for the problems and restrictions INGOs were encountering at that time.

Some organisations had been asked to leave China and others had found their work restricted. The founder of an INGO that, in a similar way to Xorg, was not a home but supported provision for children in state care, told me that the provincial government her organisation had worked with had been told by central government not to work so closely with NGOs. She connected this to the Olympic Games being an important public-relations event for the Chinese state nationally and internationally, and speculated that tighter restrictions on INGOs were part of the state's risk-management strategy. Although she had been able to establish a working relationship with city governments within the province and with the China Social Work Association (see below), her organisation's work had been restricted to the cities, rather than including the surrounding areas as had previously been the case, and she told me that visas for their 'foreign experts' were not being renewed. The uncertainty around legal status for INGOs, even before the Olympics, is argued to have resulted in caution on the part of officials who do not have clear guidance and do not want to be held responsible for any problems; this caution in itself, it is argued, contributes to the difficulties these organisations experience in obtaining legal status (Ma 2006 p. 175).

At the time of my fieldwork a single explicit way was not specified for an organisation to formally register as an NGO (or organisation 'for public benefit', or 'social organisation' – sometimes a more common term in China) with a government body designed to regulate such organisations. Instead, INGOs gained legal operational status in several ways, including:

Establishing Hong Kong or Macao-based headquarters or branches through which their programs are run in the mainland [...] Opening representative offices in Beijing, with a government institution as a supervising agency [...] Opening offices in cities other than Beijing, and registering with the local bureaus of civil affairs [...] Registering with the bureau of industry and commerce as a business company [...].

(Ma 2006 p. 177)

Organisations with foreign staff are regularly monitored by agencies such as the Public Security Bureau (Chan 2008 p. 246). Xorg's work was facilitated and monitored by the China Social Work Association, which is attached to the Ministry of Civil Affairs. The China Social Work Association is a Government-Organised NGO (GONGO). It is an example of an NGO which did not emerge from civil society and has close ties to government (Yan, Huang et al. 2007). GONGOs are argued to 'perform functions for which a state identity is problematic', which includes working with foreign NGOs (Thiers 2009p. 146). The China Social Work Association facilitated and accompanied Xorg on trips to institutions, and from the middle of my fieldwork period three members of its staff were based in Xorg's offices part time – and this could be construed in various ways from a fully functional partnership to an exercise of control on the part of the government.

At a meeting with UNICEF it was emphasised to me that none of UNICEF's projects in China were UN projects, but were instead UN-assisted projects; that UNICEF was present at the invitation of the government; and that it was working with the government and in agreement with the government. It was suggested that other organisations could actually work more independently and more flexibly. Foreign organisations are all generally introduced to the same child-welfare institutions, however. Xorg's work began in the Shanghai

children's welfare home, which was also the location for work by another INGO (Nyland and Nyland 2005 p. 292). One of the institutions I visited with Xorg, in another prosperous city on the east coast, had the support of at least three other of the most high-profile INGOs working in child welfare in China. In this thesis I shall consider representations of the constraints around Xorg's work and of its relationships with the authorities and I shall look at the way people and organisations are depicted in representations of Xorg's work.

INGOs need the government's approval, and INGOs' work can become linked to the building of the legitimacy of the Chinese government, as suggested by a study of INGO involvement in promoting village elections (Lang 2008).

Although the involvement of INGOs was seen as effective, local elections did not greatly affect the larger political system, but did feature in claims by the authorities about democratisation, human rights and the legitimate base of the Chinese Communist Party. Moreover, Lang argues, the success of the INGOs in this case was related to their providing sound but non-controversial, technical assistance; Lang concludes that INGOs should focus on non-sensitive areas and that they need good relationships with domestic partners, especially the Chinese government (2008 pp. 235–6).

The suggestion that, to be effective, INGOs should focus on non-sensitive areas raises multiple challenges for any foreign organisation working in child welfare. Child welfare is a sensitive area that generates comment, emotional responses, criticisms, anger, defensiveness and shame in the course of negotiating ideas

about social policy and the way the state or local communities care for their members.

The historical record of the way international actors have approached child welfare in China includes the television programme *The Dying Rooms: China's Darkest Secret*, broadcast on Channel Four in the UK in July 1995, and *Death by Default: Fatal Neglect in China's State Orphanages*, a report published in January 1996 by the organisation Human Rights Watch, which both made allegations of a government policy of leaving some babies to die, and thus 'elevated the problems of Chinese orphanages to the highest level of state-directed human rights abuses, far above mere welfare failure and neglect' (Johnson 2004 pp. 186-9). More recently, *China's Stolen Children*, a programme shown on Channel Four in the UK in October 2007, argued that Chinese government policy, specifically the one-child policy, had led to crisis levels of trade in kidnapped children. I was told by several individuals that such media coverage had made obtaining legal status and access to institutions difficult for foreign organisations because of the fear and anger generated in the Chinese authorities. The impact of such programmes and reports on the improvement of welfare provision for vulnerable children is, however, highly contested and under-researched, and it is also suggested that non-Chinese and Chinese researchers' access to the field is only a matter of degree (Thuno 2006).

Even without international media scandal, understandings of child development, what good care is, and in what way a child's qualitative

experience of care should be changed are likely to differ significantly between an INGO and its potential domestic partners, which in the case of child welfare in China include various levels of governmental authorities and child-welfare institutions. INGOs must manage conflict around, on the one hand, doing work that may be seen as mitigating the negative impact of government policy and, on the other hand, acting in cooperation with the government and in compliance with government policy (Lewis and Kanji 2009). I shall look at representations of what the organisation Xorg is doing, of understandings of service delivery and advocacy activities, and of how the sensitivity of the context is depicted.

The practice of NGOs working with government, and the need of NGOs to maintain good relationships with government is, of course, not specific to China. In many countries organisations that could be expected to be focusing on lobbying and changing law or policy are at the same time delivering services within the government's parameters and, often, with government funding (Edelman and Haugerud 2005). Working with government may also be necessary for organisations operating on a larger scale than small grassroots organisations. The situation in China is different because of the degree to which organisations are connected to and dependent on the government, and because of the relatively recent emergence of a fledgling independent civil society as understood elsewhere (Metzger 2001; Ma 2006). Also, the literature suggests that in China, the dependence of NGOs on the government often takes an intangible form. Local offices and individual officials have considerable powers

of discretion. It can be necessary to divert energies to influence the official rather than the policymaking process (Lu 2008 p. 101). The quality of connections to the government is depicted as significant, as these connections are an important source of information about government policies and practices in a political culture that lacks transparency, and they are a source of protection (Lu 2008 p. 93). This situation raises a number of questions about the meaning and practice of partnership, the dynamics of power, and what actors in international-development projects understand themselves as doing in relation to others and how they make sense of the relationship between themselves and the authorities. I shall look at representations of the relations between Xorg and the authorities in my data.

In addition, any INGO's relationships with others are formed in the context of an official state language in which the idea of a cultural binary between Chinese and foreign retains significance and carries connotations of mistrust. A passage on contact between ordinary Chinese citizens and foreigners from a handbook on *waishi* (foreign affairs), published in 1993, stated:

Chinese citizens who have contact with foreigners must conscientiously observe our nation's laws, decrees and relevant foreign affairs policies and regulations. [...] Unless the permission of Foreign Affairs offices has been given, it is forbidden to visit foreign embassies, consulates, apartments and other foreigners' residential quarters. It is forbidden to disseminate to foreigners expressions of discontent, or reactionary views that attack our party or socialist system.

(Brady 2003 p. 3)

This formal attitude to foreigners arose from a defensive concern to control both foreigners and the Chinese population. There is a longstanding idea that foreigners may threaten the security of the state, an idea which has developed a

particular quality, different to that in other countries, over the course of Chinese history.

Relationships between foreigners and others have radically transformed in some social groups in some areas of China since the writing in 1993 of the handbook from which the extract above is taken. Nevertheless, the historical context of fear and mistrust is still relevant. My own and others' 'foreignness' was a frequent feature of discussions about access to institutions and their staff. Some of my experiences related to this are discussed later in this chapter. The state continues to produce particular, and powerful, representations of foreigners, but public opinion of the world outside China has changed, and in the last two decades a tension can be seen between ideas about foreigners and foreign involvement in China. As Ma (2006) states:

Fighting the tide, the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] has constantly resorted to nationalist sentiments and the memory of China's humiliation in contemporary history to strengthen its ideology.

Such a perpetuation of communist ideology and propaganda has prolonged the distrust of foreign countries and organizations. Even though the government is now encouraging all types of foreign aid to China's economic and social development, suspicions towards the motivation behind foreign organizations cast a big shadow over the official attitude.

(Ma 2006 pp. 171-2)

The more positive image of the foreigner, as evoked by more recent official texts, often has a particular tone that emphasises the notion of the foreigners' friendliness towards China. As Brady explains:

The positive symbol of the objectified foreign Other in new China is the 'foreign friend'. The foreign friend's moral antithesis is the foreign imperialist or foreign spy, who unlike foreign friends is usually generic. 'Foreign friends' and 'friendship' have become the key words to the CCP [Chinese Communist Party]'s ideology of the foreign in China. [...] After more than fifty years of assiduous propaganda work on Sino-foreign relations, both foreigners and Chinese alike now frequently find themselves, wittingly or not, enmeshed in a worldview which evaluates Sino-foreign interactions in terms of

whether they are 'friendly' or not to China, a 'China' which implicitly means that ruled by the CCP. Breaking through such a paradigm to establish genuine interaction and a genuine exchange of ideas and opinions is one of the challenges of Sino-foreign interaction in the future.

(Brady 2003 p. 251)

This situation presents challenges for foreign organisations around how they operate in an environment in which friendship is officially promoted as the basis for the relationship. This is particularly relevant for those wishing to contribute in the field of social welfare, where building relationships, and therefore trust, is especially challenging given the obstacles and sensitivity mentioned above. Brady's final sentence above, about the exchange of ideas, is important in setting the context for this thesis. While the thesis is not concerned with identifying interactions as 'genuine' or not, it does examine constructions of the 'Sino-foreign' binary and it is very much concerned with what ideas are drawn upon and how they are used in interactions in what some would call a 'cross-cultural' situation. As I shall discuss in Chapters Two and Three, my theoretical approach foregrounds the construction of the cultural context, whether in terms of Sino-foreign or UK-China binaries or in other ways, such as distinguishing between the cultures of child-welfare institutions and those outside them.

In practical terms on the ground, while some INGOs have developed long-term programmes of work, some of the relationships between child-welfare institutions and outsiders are one-offs, which last perhaps only a few hours, as indicated by the following quotation:

When I arrived to study a non-governmental social welfare institution, it was expecting a visit the following day by a group of foreign tourists, who were going to make a

donation. Some staff members were organizing the residents of the institution to give it a clean-up. However, they were stopped by the manager, who said the place would become dirty again if it was cleaned too early, so they should not bother with the cleaning until shortly before the arrival of the visitors. In another non-governmental institution, a residential home for mentally disabled people, I saw some written instructions from the manager to the staff before the visit by an INGO from which it hoped to receive funding and technical assistance. The instructions, which were extremely detailed, told the staff how to prepare the place in order to make a good impression on the visitors. For example, the staff were told to hang photographs showing the daily lives of the residents in each room, to put some books and toys in the communal living room, and to install a small kitchen. In short, the manager wrote: 'The place should have as much a family atmosphere as possible.'

(Lu 2009 p. 88)

This quotation is illustrative of the complexity in the interaction between child-welfare institutions and outside aid or foreign contact. In this case the maintenance of consistent standards seen as acceptable to foreigners could be either currently unobtainable or not normally required or desired. There is perhaps a desire to impress in order to obtain resources, although it is not clear whether the managers agreed that the institution should have a family atmosphere or whether they just wanted the institution to have that appearance. The passage illustrates the ad hoc nature of some relationships between INGOs and institutions; I shall reflect on representations of relationships between Xorg and institutions in my analysis of my data. The next section will look at the circumstances of children in state care in China.

Child welfare in China

This section will discuss the circumstances of children in state care, child-welfare institutions, alternative care and foster care, and social work. It will emphasise that there is much that is unknown or unclear. The Chinese term for an institution providing state care is either 儿童福利院 (for one reserved for children) or 社会福利院 (for one serving a number of groups, including

disabled people or older people). The former term is translated as 'child-/children's welfare institute/institution/home' and, frequently, also as 'orphanage'. The latter term drops the reference to child or children and is a 'social-welfare institute/institution/home'. I mostly use the term 'child-welfare institution', and sometimes 'orphanage', in this thesis. Although the term 'home' may appear preferable in acknowledging the meaning of the place to a child, care must be taken not to confuse the term with its use in the UK context, for example, in which it refers to a group home in which a small number of children live together. The size of establishments in China varies, but some can house hundreds of children; in 2000, the child-welfare institution in Beijing had 500 beds (Shang 2002 p. 217). Although the terms 'orphanage' and 'orphans' are outdated in the UK context, they are commonly used by Chinese and international actors to refer to what is seen as basic institutional care in China and the children who live in those often large establishments.

When China's 'reform and opening up' (改革开放) began in December 1978, poor living conditions and the consequences of several decades of a turbulent and violent national history, along with international isolation, dominated the lives of the majority of Chinese people. China's economic reforms were politically driven and were the trigger for the welfare reforms that became even more urgently needed. The welfare reforms that were implemented focused on the major and immediate problems arising from the economic reforms, such as in the areas of housing, healthcare and pensions (Chan, Ngok et al. 2008).

Children in care did not appear near the top of the policy agenda. *Social Policy*

in China: Development and Well Being, one of the few textbooks on social policy in China, mentions 'orphans' only in passing in a list of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Civil Affairs (Chan, Ngok et al. 2008 p. 51). This seems indicative of their position in the social-policy climate for much of the period since 1978.

It is difficult to establish the backgrounds of the children in state care. As

Dorow explains:

In most cases, children arrive at orphanages with no information on birth families or the circumstances of relinquishment. [...] the structural factors scholars and adoption experts think variously combine to lead to abandonment [are]: the stringencies of the family-planning policy, cultural and economic gender relations that 'necessitate' having a son, rural or urban poverty, stigma and lack of resources for special-needs children, and lack of social and legal support for single motherhood. But it is difficult to know which of these factors come into play in individual cases, with what frequency, or in what ways. Neither is a national survey of Chinese birth families or the discovery of circumstances in individual cases very likely. No matter how much information one has about abandonment in general, there is rarely if ever enough to be definitive about a specific child's history.

(Dorow 2006 p. 168)

In addition there are different patterns in the needs of children living in institutions in different parts of China and these can change over just a few years. For example, the eastern, coastal areas have seen a movement in institutional demographics from predominantly healthy baby girls to disabled children since the mid-1990s (Dowling and Brown 2009).

The phrase 'child-welfare system' may be misleading in that for a UK reader, for example, it may conjure up an image of a system in which a number of different people, agencies and services is involved in providing a programme of care for a child. There is a horizontal feel to that kind of system. In China, until recently and still in some provinces or districts, the institution is the only

element, and the institution has bureaucratic hierarchical relationships with levels of government but few relationships with other parties in terms of practice.

China has not implemented a formal, official programme of what in a Euro-North American context may be referred to – as a result of different understandings and conceptualisations – as deinstitutionalisation of children in orphanages, although the number of children in foster care in China has grown. Moves are being made to turn residential institutions into non-residential service centres from where the foster-care programmes and related child-welfare services will be run, but in most cases some children are still living in these institutions. Several individuals told me about the government's Blue Sky programme, which was investing in children's service centres; however, they feared that new institutions, rather than service centres, would be the result. Moreover, newly built institutions continue to be physically large and imposing, rather than small homes for the care of children who may not be able to live in a family.

Welfare institutions vary enormously throughout China, between and within different provinces. Some have seen much investment in facilities. The following quotation highlights some of the diversity as well as the link between international activity and differences in care provision in different institutions:

As might be expected, welfare institutions vary in size from dozens to hundreds of children, as well as in management styles, staff training, utilization of home-based foster care, and facilities and services available at the orphanage (some have schools and staff doctors and rehabilitation equipment, some have just basic living facilities). It

is difficult to gauge the full range, in part because orphanages also vary greatly in level and manner of contact with foreigners, including those who adopt their children and help bring in resources. But it is clear that a minority of orphanages participates in international adoption, and that there is a correlation between participation and resource allocation.

(Dorow 2006 p. 73)

In line with this diversity, alternative care and foster-care programmes in various shapes and forms have developed. Forms of foster care have been historically present in China, both informally as a private matter between families and also slightly more formally, for example in the Datong foster-care project established after 1949 (Waltner 1990; Shang and Wu 2003b; Shang 2008). According to the limited literature available, however, it is since the 1990s that the number of formal foster-care programmes has grown and that some kind of policy shift from institutional care to foster care appears to have occurred (Shang 2002; Shang and Wu 2003a).

Some commentators are positive about the development of foster care and the role of INGOs in this development. It is argued that a change in policy to moving children from institutions and placing them in families has been observed, and that the policy process has involved interactions between various bodies and organisations, rather than a formal, centrally directed policy change.

Writing about the transition from institutional care to foster care, Shang states:

Although the policy has not officially changed, the system of supporting orphaned, abandoned, and disabled children in China is experiencing a quiet revolution. The main drive has not come from above, that is, from the central government, but from the bottom, from the initiative of local officials who are directly facing huge challenges from the socioeconomic transition and the activities of various NGOs, both domestic and overseas. The newly developed civil society and the emergent middle class support the activities of these NGOs.

(Shang 2002 p. 223)

Chapter One: Introduction

Several different models of foster care have been followed. In many cases the model has been based on family-like units providing institutional care. This was the model used by some of the first programmes, established by the organisation Save the Children. It has been suggested that the model of changing a large institutional system of care into family-like units still providing what is essentially institutional care is a result of difficulties in persuading local officials to accept foster care in a family environment (Shang 2002 p. 215). In a meeting with a member of staff at Save the Children, I was told that the organisation had experienced resistance from the authorities when trying to establish foster-care programmes and that eventually an agreement had been reached to establish group homes physically located within the institution. Several INGOs, including SOS Children's Villages and Half the Sky, have claimed to have established group homes, however. Approaches to foster care are also influenced by other care options being used in other parts of the system. Dorow reports that a number of international adoption agencies promised adoptive parents that as soon as a child was matched with them, she would be placed in foster care (Dorow 2006 pp. 93-4).

The transition to forms of foster care has not been easy, especially for domestic NGOs. Lu describes the predicament of one private orphanage in Wuhan, which set out to provide small group homes with married couples recruited to work as carers:

Each couple was assigned a few orphans who came to live with them and their own children. The experiment failed because the modest allowance for each orphan which the orphanage was able to provide could only support a relatively frugal life. If their own children were to be treated in the same way as the orphans living with them, which

was essential to the success of this care model, it would mean a considerable decrease in the living standard of their own children, which proved to be too difficult for the house parents to accept. After some time, the founder had to abandon the experiment and reorganised the orphanage along the line of state-run children's welfare homes, which seemed to be the cheapest way to care for a sizable number of children.

(Lu 2003 p. 8)

There have been attempts to introduce broad consistent standards into policy and practice. Most significantly, the Chinese government published *Interim Measures for the Management of Family Fosterage* (Ministry of Civil Affairs 2003). This brief document attempts to regulate foster care and provides guidance on the children for whom foster care is appropriate, the selection and responsibilities of families, the responsibilities of social-welfare organisations running foster-care programmes, supervision arrangements, and other administrative matters, including finance.

As a more open system develops, and indeed a 'system' in terms of liaison between the various bodies and professionals involved in a child's care, the role of social worker is also developing. Social work as a discipline in higher education was reintroduced in 1988 (Wang and Yuen-Tsang 2008) but little literature on social-work practice in mainland China has been produced (Ng 2009). Recently, central-government weight has been placed behind the development of the social-work profession. At the 16th Central Committee meeting of the Chinese Communist Party in 2006, President Hu Jintao released the document *The Decisions Concerning Several Major Problems in Building a Socialist Harmonious Society*, which supported the building of the social-work profession and proposed regulations on the recruitment and training of professional social workers (Yuen-Tsang and Wang 2008). In July 2006 the

Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Ministry of Personnel of China published *Provisional Regulations on the Assessment of the Vocational Standards of Social Workers and Measures for the Implementation of the Examination Regarding Professional Qualifications of Social Workers*, which were designed to establish an assessment system at the national level (Yuen-Tsang and Wang 2008; Zhen 2008). In 2008 the first national exams in social work, though conducted regionally and not in all regions, took place.

The difference between social work in China and that elsewhere is the subject of a hotly contested debate, as evidenced by a discussion in the *International Journal of Social Welfare*. One author highlighted the international definition of social work, saying that:

[...] social work development in China is still largely isolated from the international social work community. There is evidently an urgent need for a more active dialogue with China, and to provide the needed support to develop its social work capacity, social status and public recognition. The international definition [of social work ...] can serve as a platform for more mutual understanding and influence.

(Leung 2007 p. 397)

Other writers, however, suggest some elements of international social work that could be problematic in China, for example a problem-solving approach, the use of politicised terms such as 'empowerment' and 'liberation', the application of Western theory, principles of human rights, and principles of social justice.

They highlight the development of indigenous social work, warning that:

Social work has its 'toe in the door' in China, but the development of an indigenous and professional tradition of social work will take time, as indeed occurred in Western countries where social work evolved over decades, before the forces of globalisation made instant transfer of approaches between cultures seemingly possible.

(Hutchings and Taylor 2007 p. 389)

Another author challenges:

[...] East-West dichotomies and the tendency to essentialise Chinese and Western culture and Chinese and Western social work. Just as there is no monolithic Western or Chinese culture, there is no monolithic social work, neither in the East nor in the West. [...] claims to the notion that there are values that are peculiarly Asian, pointing to conservatism and authoritarianism, and to liberal views that co-exist in both the East and the West.

(Sewpaul 2007 p. 405)

This debate about international and indigenous social work is relevant for my study because organisations working with staff in child-welfare institutions in China must position themselves in terms of the nature of social work; its basis and values; and ideas about Chinese, Western, and international social work. They must consider how to apply Western or international social-work concepts, or how to support Chinese social work, or how to take another approach. In China, levels of education among those actually performing social-work roles can be low. Social-service organisations often do not hire personnel trained in social work, and the graduates of social-work programmes tend not to work in social-service settings (Chi 2005). Staff in child-welfare institutions may have an administrative background or a teaching or medical background, but are often not social workers. Understandings of institutionalisation and its implications vary. In addition, as in many other countries, including the UK, workers can find it a challenge to acknowledge how the care system itself can sometimes neglect the needs of children.

The first part of this chapter has depicted the context in which Xorg is working by looking firstly at the situation of INGOs in China and secondly at the field of child welfare in China. The image evoked is of an environment that presents considerable challenges and in which organisations are likely to experience

difficulty in carrying out a programme of work. These challenges are connected to the position of INGOs, the social-policy context, the existing arrangements for children in state care, and the current status of social work.

The next part of this chapter will tell the story of my research journey. It will explain how I came to focus on the way in which the possibilities and constraints afforded by being part of an INGO in child welfare in China were negotiated in identity work. In what I understood to be a challenging context, as depicted above, I began to ask: what did people indicate they were doing and as what kind of actors did they represent themselves? The next section will describe the evolution of my research questions, while introducing Xorg and explaining how I came to spend time with that organisation.

My research journey

I shall describe my research journey in detail at this early stage in the thesis because my puzzlement in the first part of my fieldwork was central to the nature of the data generated, and the way my thinking developed at that time is inseparable from my interpretation of the data and what I shall present in the empirical chapters. It was through the early part of my research journey that I developed the focus of my research and adjusted my theoretical and methodological approach.

This thesis examines the construction and performance of individual and organisational identities during the fieldwork period. The building of identities

drew upon conflicting ideas about what the organisation was doing, what kind of organisation it was, what kind of actors members of staff were, and the way in which the organisation's tasks were being or could be approached. I shall outline in this section my impression of the organisation at the time just before my fieldwork and my response to what was happening when I entered the field. My thesis is not about evaluating the organisation against the claims made in public documents, whether formal reports or promotional materials, and I do not wish inadvertently to set up such a frame here. However, I will draw upon claims made by the organisation in order to outline my expectations where these are relevant to the development of the research.

Working out the basis of a relationship

The negotiations which occurred before I entered the field, around the arrangements for my time with Xorg, form the basis of the first part of my tale of identity work in Xorg, in interactions and relationships, especially between me and members of Xorg staff. There was initially a considerable degree of formality to the negotiations, redolent of the establishing of a partnership between two organisations or two parties. There was concern with aims, objectives and outcomes, for both sides, and from the beginning the project was set up as a reciprocal one in which we, or more specifically the work of the organisation and the data generation and analysis for my PhD research, would benefit each other. The formality of these negotiations was related to the wider context in which my university and Xorg were involved in negotiations to provide programmes in social-work education to the staff of child-welfare

institutions. The opportunity for me to spend time with Xorg had arisen during meetings between my university and Xorg and was referred to by Xorg as an 'internship'. I understood that Xorg had previously had 'interns' in its offices and that these interns had generally done some work for Xorg while gaining work experience or learning about Xorg's work in order to further their own development or studies.

The opportunity of spending time with Xorg was attractive, given that after almost a year of efforts to find openings to conduct research on provision for children in state care in China, I found that Xorg was the only organisation that agreed to host me and the only organisation that seemed confident about facilitating my contact with state institutions. Many organisations, when I approached them during the early part of my doctoral programme, felt unable to host a foreigner, or at least drew on this as a reason for their negative responses to my requests for participation (even minimally intrusive forms) in my research. Other organisations were keen to assist with data generation in China, but were ultimately unable to facilitate an opportunity through which I could conduct research. For example, the high-profile, Chinese director of a UK-based NGO whose work was related to child welfare in China had hoped to be able to facilitate a visit for me to an institution with which her own organisation had a relationship. However, when I went with her to China on an exploratory, preparatory trip, this was not possible, much to her and her colleagues' surprise, and for reasons which were unclear, although apparently related to my foreignness. In another, unrelated, attempt to further my research on this

exploratory trip, I planned to visit a foster-care programme in another city, an opportunity arranged for me by a Nanjing University professor whom I already knew. She used her personal contacts to set up this visit and we both understood the arrangements to be settled and the relevant officials to be expecting a visitor from the UK. Prior to the trip I met a journalist who had already interviewed some of the foster families. In the event, I spent a day travelling across the city between staff in different departments of government, including the Office of Foreign Affairs, who disagreed on the documentation I needed to obtain from each of them. None of them would take responsibility for my visit, and I made no progress in making connections with child-welfare programmes. Given the surprise of both women who tried to assist my research at the resistance I encountered, I was led to conjecture that this resistance was possibly related to restrictive government directives and confused or anxious officials in the context of the upcoming Olympic Games, as was mentioned earlier in this chapter. These two examples are illustrative of the wider context in which the research was conducted and of the difficulties I encountered in setting up my research before the opportunity to spend time with Xorg arose.

Before beginning my fieldwork, I understood from Xorg's own organisational literature that it was a registered charity in the UK, the USA and Hong Kong, that it worked in partnership with the national and local government in China, and that one of its main aims was to assist in moving disadvantaged children out of institutions and into long-term family care. I thought of the organisation as an international one. I understood that there was a mix of staff in terms of

nationalities and ethnicities. This mix was later confirmed to include ethnically Chinese people from China, one ethnically Chinese person from Hong Kong and ethnically white people from the UK. Many of the staff had experience of other countries. Apart from the people from the UK, who had been living in China for up to ten years, some of the people from China had received postgraduate education in the UK, and one person, from Hong Kong, had received both secondary and higher education in the UK.

At this point I shall also mention the experience of the members of staff in relation to social work or child welfare. Over time, I came to understand this to be as follows. One member of staff from the UK, the director, was a qualified social worker, in the UK. The members of the training team were all Chinese members of staff from China. Two had taken a master's degree in International Child Welfare in the UK, sponsored by Xorg. These two members of staff had backgrounds in teaching and in doing translation work for child-welfare institutions, both in China, before joining Xorg. Another had worked for many years in child-welfare institutions in China. The administrator had worked for the China Centre of Adoption Affairs as a translator.

I understood Xorg to be primarily a training organisation. From the organisational publicity I had seen (see Chapter Four) I understood it to focus specifically on foster care and the scale of the work to be considerable, in terms of both geographical impact and the range of aspects of foster care looked at in detail, such as life-story work and preparation for independence. I had the

impression that Xorg was a good place to find out about foster care in China, and thus about the development of provision for children in state care. Interestingly, Xorg's literature mentioned foster care in individual family homes, not group homes, which other organisations had developed in the local context – as was discussed earlier in this chapter. In addition to Xorg's own literature, I had read an academic publication written by social-work academics from the UK about the 'innovative' fostering project attached to the child-welfare institution in Shanghai run by the Shanghai city government with advice and support from Xorg (Beckett and Thoburn 2002). In addition, I had read a book chapter, published by the director of Xorg, about the same project in Shanghai and the successful achievement of its objectives (Glover 2006)¹.

The making of the plans for the period of time I would spend with Xorg began three months before my arrival. A conference call was held between the director, B², and the training manager, S, both from Xorg, one of my PhD supervisors, and me. Prior to this call, I had sent B and S a document to form a basis for the discussion, based on the initial communication that had already taken place

¹ The inclusion of such potentially identifying information is for the purpose of examination of the thesis and will be reviewed for publications and copies of the thesis supplied elsewhere.

² The use of letters rather than names to represent individuals is discussed in the methodology chapter and Appendix One is a list of individuals by letter and organisational role.

between us. This document had suggested, among other things, a main focus for my research and intended outcomes from the internship for both Xorg and my research. The document stated that my research would 'focus on the development of foster care in China including the training of foster carers and include consideration of social care structures, understandings of foster care, supervision arrangements, and the relationships between different elements of the child-welfare system'. The outcomes were to be a preliminary report of an evaluation of Xorg's training, to have been completed by the end the internship, for Xorg, and to have generated data from observation of training and interviews with trainees, for my research. The idea of an evaluation had been the result of a previous meeting between my university and the director of Xorg.

My record of the telephone meeting states that B and S were happy with the focus of my research and the general plans for data generation. In response to the above suggestions, my notes record that in addition to an evaluation of training, other possibilities for the piece of work I would do for Xorg were suggested by Xorg. These possibilities were a piece of research or the production of some guidance on a topic such as: independent people on foster panels; the differences between long-term and short-term foster care, including the motivations for using these; and clashes between the agendas of different organisations supporting foster-care programmes in China, and the implications for the children. I also noted that Xorg was running a variety of courses – including not only the basic foster-care course but also other courses on subjects such as life-story work and preparation for independence – and that

work was being done on courses looking at how to link attachment theory to practice and how to improve the capacity for resilience of children in care.

At this stage of the negotiations around my presence in Xorg, my notes were written as though both Xorg and I were focused on the details of care practices, the state of affairs in the wider context of provision for children in care, and the centrality of trainees to both Xorg's work and my research. My notes of the telephone meeting were typed at the time but were not circulated to Xorg as I thought of them as a record for myself. They represent the meeting from my own point of view and reflect my own expectations of what the internship would involve and some of my understandings of the work of the organisation.

On reflection, I realise that the notes show that the initial negotiations may have been constricted in some way; while an agreement was made, there was little negotiation in the sense of setting out conflicting positions and working out some form of compromise. Xorg consented to what had been proposed and suggested some alternative topics for the piece of work I would do for them. With hindsight, the agreement with Xorg seems to have been an agreement in principle, or an agreement on the fundamental matter of my physical presence in the organisation. None of the topics mentioned, either for my research or for Xorg, proved to be feasible topics of study, given the opportunities available during my time with the organisation. The divergence between this initial discussion and how things worked out raises questions about what was happening in the initial negotiations. I am describing this divergence here, at

this point in the thesis, as it indicates a key point in the development of my approach, which was to foreground how knowledge and identities are interwoven and context driven as they are created and negotiated in interaction, and how there is variability in the performance of identities. The kind of organisation Xorg is, and the kind of actors its staff are, varies, depending on the context.

The variation in depictions of Xorg is illustrated by the different representations of the organisation and its work generated as my preparation for my trip continued in communication with S. An email from S just over a month before my departure explained that she had been thinking about my participation in Xorg's work and had been reconsidering how to enable me to become fully involved and have direct contact with people. S wrote that she would like to ask me to think about developing a training topic or workshop, and she explained that the theme for the year was preparation for independence. S's email provides some clues about her understanding of the 'internship' – that I would be a contributor to the training programme. With hindsight, it is possible to see movement in the negotiations towards my task being related to the production of materials, and this is informative regarding how Xorg wanted to benefit from our relationship, and possibly reflects what Xorg wanted from my university more generally.

My response to S's email included an outline of my level of knowledge and skills in regard to social work and Mandarin, and was somewhat resistant to S's

suggestion of preparing training materials; it was a manifestation of my fears about the inadequacy of my own knowledge, skills and experience in doing a piece of work for Xorg, which appeared to be a high-status organisation, with high-profile supporters (see Chapter Four), that had already understood how to deal with the ins and outs of foster care in a cross-cultural context.

S's reply to my response explained that Xorg had been delivering basic training workshops on foster care and promoting foster care. S explained that they had developed training material on preparation for independence in response to demand. She stated that the organisation was now in a transition period and was developing new training, and she said that for that reason it would be hard for me to evaluate the training. When I was looking back much later, after my return from fieldwork, at the emails I had received from S, I understood more of the significance of the fact that she had actually told me that 'we have been delivering workshops on basic training on foster care ... we were aware that the training needs to go further and deeper in many aspects' and that 'we are in a transition period of time'. She had been gently priming me with the knowledge that this was a transition time for the training programme. Her later email listed areas in which trainers were thinking of developing new training; these included attachment theory, case work in social-work practice, what assessment is in the context of fostering, and counselling to older children and young people. In this email, S suggested that I pair up with one of the trainers to develop training and participate in the training so that I could obtain 'direct information'. The option of an evaluation was now ruled out. At this moment in

my correspondence with S, a different perspective on the training provided to date was offered – that so far the organisation had been running basic-level workshops – although I did not pick up on the full significance of that at the time. Some topics listed didn't relate to preparation for independence, the theme for the year. Finally, the original suggestion of my preparing material on a training topic was modified to my working with one of the existing trainers to do that activity, possibly in response to my expressed lack of confidence.

In my correspondence with S prior to departure I warned her about what, at that time, I saw to be my limited ability to contribute to work requiring technical expertise and professional experience; she opened up more about the training delivered so far and the current transition process and reassured me about how I could contribute by working with an existing member of staff. The topics covered by the training were broad. Preparation for independence was repeatedly emphasised but other topics were also given weight. There was some hint that the courses run so far had been basic-level courses on foster care in general, but what I heard at the time – the information which I thought I had heard and which I took on board – was that the trainers already had a number of training topics in their repertoires. S seemed to have taken particular care to reassure me about my role, however, including making the key adjustment of my working with an existing member of staff, rather than producing materials by myself. I am describing this in some detail in order to reflect on what Xorg's expectations may have been, as well as on my own, and so to set the scene for the thesis by outlining the basis of our relationship. Also, I am introducing the

way in which key aspects of my approach became important. These included the importance of the audience in social interaction and performances of identities. There was variation in these negotiations: in how the organisation was represented in interactions with my university in contrast to with me, and between S and myself in contrast to when B and my supervisor were present. The context-driven variability of organisational identity became important for my research, suggested in what I have related above by how the areas on which Xorg was working were being presented in different ways in different moments.

The metamorphosis of my research objectives

After my arrival at Xorg I had difficulty in understanding the work of the organisation. There seemed to be something which was clear to everyone else but which I could not see. I was surrounded by many stories about the past and many stories about the future, including those of apparently high-profile developments such as a school and clinic for children with special needs, which would be a model of best practice to be drawn upon in training work. As was mentioned above, Xorg was also in negotiations to run education programmes in social work, in conjunction with my own university in the UK. The nature of the current Xorg training programme differed greatly from what I had expected. In contrast to depictions of the past and the future, the present – that is the period I was there – was being identified as a ‘quiet time’ and a period of ‘transition’ by Xorg members of staff. I was told that sometimes there were ‘a few months or so of consolidation’. I discovered that ‘research and evaluation visits’ to institutions had been conducted a few months before, and I was told

that the training programme was now being revised in accordance with the findings from those visits. The organisation had moved into its current building five months before, which had been a big change. The impact of the move on the work was the basis for a debate around the extent to which training courses would now be held in the centre, rather than in or near institutions throughout China. On day five of my fieldwork, one member of staff told me that what the director and his wife had done in the first ten years was 'amazing', but that recently most of the effort had been on physically moving into the new building. In this section I shall explain how I persisted with an ethnographic study, focusing on the present moment, by responding to how various representations of the organisation in the past and future were being performed in identity work.

When I was beginning my fieldwork, my research questions were about care. My aim was to understand the development of provision for children in state care in China. In conjunction with the negotiation of a fieldwork opportunity with Xorg, I had narrowed this down to aiming to understand the development of foster care in China through studying the training of family-placement workers, which I understood to be Xorg's specialism. As stated in a document I wrote one month before beginning my fieldwork, my research questions covered 'ideas about what is good care and about the changing roles of institutional staff as they become family placement workers' and asked: 'how do providers and recipients of training create meaning in the context of the rapid and considerable transformation of the child welfare system?'. Moreover,

my research was to 'contribute to knowledge about the practice of foster care' and I confidently anticipated that 'the research will identify what is working well in training relating to the development of foster care'.

I intended to research all of the issues mentioned above by being a participant observer focusing on 'the details of interaction in the preparation, delivery and receipt of training'. I hoped to supplement the participant observation with interviews. I planned to conduct both individual interviews with Xorg staff and group interviews with family-placement trainees. I made this plan in the light of my thinking that group interviews would be preferable to individual interviews, on the basis of the belief that the main obstacles would be time constraints during courses and political sensitivities – I had been told that I would need to be accompanied by Xorg staff and that they in turn would be accompanied by China Social Work Association staff, as per Xorg's usual working practices. I even hoped 'to obtain narratives of particular children's stories' from institutional staff to assist with exploring understandings around care.

I had made a number of assumptions. Fundamentally I had made assumptions about the relationship between development policy and practice and about the relationship between representations of a project through its theoretical model and policy on the one hand, and through more locally oriented representations of implementation and practice on the other. I had assumed that foster care in China was developing fast and that Xorg was the place to find out about it. I

had also made a number of assumptions about the work of Xorg, and I had taken many statements at face value. In terms of the practical aspects of data generation, I had assumed that I would be able to observe an ample amount of routine training, to participate in the preparation of some materials, and to access others, especially institutional staff, through Xorg. I shall reflect on these three areas below.

Assumption One

I had assumed that I would be able to observe several training courses, including those covering topics other than a basic introduction to foster care, and that these would be part of a systematic programme of training run by Xorg members of staff who were confident in this activity. Also, I had expected the training of family-placement workers to be more of the 'training the trainers' type, as the organisational literature from Xorg to which I had access before departure described a cascade model in which Xorg trained some individuals, who then trained others. Xorg's *Annual Report* from 2006 includes a diagram showing 'how the leaders trained at a single workshop start a training chain' as '50 leaders train ... 150 foster care staff who train ... 1200 parents who foster'. Although the numbers sounded ambitious and raised issues about understandings of knowledge processes and pedagogy, I did not question whether the cascade model was actually in operation. As time passed, I began to focus on how these claims were made in particular contexts, in dialogue, and on how the function of these claims was interesting, illuminating and important for my thesis, although in a different way to that I had expected, as I now

focused on what the making of the claims accomplished. This will become clear in the next two chapters, where I shall outline my theoretical and methodological approach.

During the fieldwork period there were two formal training courses, which I observed and which took place in the training facilities at Xorg's offices. One training course was held in mid-March, covering various topics related to foster care. The formal training sessions in this course lasted for two-and-a-half days – Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday morning – although delegates arrived on Monday and left on Friday, and so were able to network for longer. There were 28 delegates on the course. Details of what courses would be running when, during my time with the organisation, were beyond reach. There was much speculation about the frequency, location and topics of further courses. There was talk of a 'pilot' training on attachment, which was eventually run mid-late May, with 16 delegates, and lasted for the same length of time as the March course.

I also accompanied staff on three visits to institutions. Visit One could be seen as preparation for later training work through the establishment of a relationship with the institution, although the purpose of the trip was somewhat of a puzzle (this will be discussed in Chapter Six). Visit Two was a trip I accompanied, during which a representative of one of Xorg's funders was taken to see a foster-care programme (analysis of my fieldnotes of this trip will contribute to Chapter Four). Visit Three involved training of an ad hoc nature at

an institution that had been designated as a special rehabilitation centre for children in care who had undergone a particular operation on their spine (in Chapter Six I shall draw on my analysis of data generated on this trip).

Members of staff were involved in a small number of trips I was not able to join, which were reported to involve training. The organisation also responded to the Sichuan Earthquake, running training in the disaster area and being involved in a number of activities outside Xorg's usual remit, such as facilitating the donation of goods. The differing accounts of what training had been conducted where and for whom produced, overall, an unclear picture of what was done. My requests to join a trip to the earthquake zone were passed from person to person, but, ultimately, I did not participate in any visit to the area of the disaster.

The planning of the training programme remained significant, as it was a major activity for some members of staff. The plan was continually morphing, although the delivery of training courses appeared to have stagnated. Training courses were being scheduled, postponed and cancelled, with plans changing all the time. Talk about the training plans varied and included apparent decisions, for example that a training course would be held once a month in the centre. There was much discussion about the need for much more training, which led me to engage in speculation about the blockage, and, more importantly, to adapt the focus of my research. I realised that although I was not able to engage with very much training, I was able to engage with the way the organisation was represented; for example through what was said and done

in relation to the training programme. I wrestled with the difference between what I had understood the organisation to be doing and what I saw the organisation doing in terms of the nature of the training programme. I became more interested in how the programme was depicted. This included reflection on what constituted training in different moments and different representations of the organisation's work. It became more important to me to understand what members of Xorg staff understood about what they were doing; this was a reason for the change in my focus to how they shaped organisational and personal identities in their daily struggles.

The following example from my fieldnotes of a discussion about the training inertia allows me to illustrate the development of my approach.

In the afternoon B ended up giving S a kind of demonstration about how S should go about doing part of the preparation for organising the training programme for the next few months. He said that she should go to each person and ask them what they would feel comfortable doing training on. He acted out a mini-interview with H and J, going over the top and saying 'that's fantastic; I never knew you could do training on life story work'. This was all very hilarious.

(Fieldnote extract)

This example benefits from analysis through a performative lens (Carlson 2004).

This incident could be a performance of managerial competency by B, which involves communicating an idea about what good managers do and distinguishing himself (who has the knowledge and skills about good management) from S (who is positioned as needing this information). It could also be a performance that presents the training programme as hindered only by some lack of coordination skills on the part of S, thus reinforcing the image of a solid programme staffed by people who in this demonstration are told they

are 'fantastic', the programme being only temporarily affected by a hiccup. The responsibility, for both the training programme and the hiccup, is placed with S.

The example benefits from an approach that asks not only what work such statements and performances are doing, what is done and what is achieved here, but also why these actions were needed and what the orientation of the participants is to others. The interaction is not just between B and S; this is not a private meeting between a line manager and a member of staff to whom he wishes to give some guidance. Some other members of staff are involved; B could be communicating to them that their manager, in some cases, and colleague, in others, was not doing her job properly, and that he was. If this is the case, then B is talking against (Billig 1987) possible criticism, which may or may not come from those physically present, and his orientation to his staff is a little defensive. I realised that I needed to look at who was talking to whom in a wider sense than the tangible interaction between, say, two people having a conversation.

Performance-based approaches pay particular attention to the audience, especially the researcher (Riessman 2008). I was a player in this performance: I sat at a desk in the small office where this took place; I remember laughing politely at the humour with which the demonstration was given, despite feeling highly distressed at the possible humiliation of S; and thus I was physically present in this drama, perhaps unfortunately reinforcing B's performance with

my cooperative laughter. It was in some ways a performance for me and in some ways one which I co-performed.

In moments such as this, I began to see the importance of performance for my methodology, as well as the centrality of identity work to the data I was generating (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998). The above example shows personal identity work around managerial competency as well as representations of organisational identities in terms of Xorg's having staff able to provide a feasible training programme when organised. I decided that it was important to study the way Xorg was constructed in actions such as this talk, and to approach the organisation as a series of performances, specifically performances of identities.

These more informal representations of the organisation's work were different both to the representations of the training work in Xorg's promotional literature and to the representation of the work in the telephone conference calls in which B and one of my PhD supervisors were also present. The impact on what was said of the difference in the genre of interaction and of the audience, present or unseen and imagined, in this case between more official negotiations about a student's fieldwork and a personal email and casual remark in the office, was important. In the early part of my fieldwork, therefore, my research journey led to a focus on the complexity of being an actor in an international-development organisation such as Xorg, given that how actors understand themselves and what they are doing in a particular context, and what they do in actions

Chapter One: Introduction

(including talk), is part of how their work is carried out. The inconsistencies and contradictions are part of the complexity, as is what is not said, for example, in the instance I have been discussing, about other possible reasons for the training blockage.

Assumption Two

I had also planned to generate data through engaging in the preparation of training materials. It proved difficult, however, to break into the ways in which training was prepared. H, a training officer, was the member of staff who was most involved in preparing training materials. H spent a lot of her time preparing materials. During most of my fieldwork period, she was preparing a training course about attachment. This was the only new material under development for much of the time. H worked alone and was quiet and contained. She spent long periods in the library room. She seemed to insulate herself from whatever else was going on and was very focused. She spent a lot of time reading PowerPoint slide handouts from her master's degree course in International Child Welfare; these provided the basis for what she was working on. She seemed to be secure in working with them. Later I became aware that H was facing resistance from her own team, as well as potentially from trainees (who are institutional staff) in regard to what she wanted to say to trainees about institutionalisation, children's rights and child development. It transpired that she was a lone figure in regard to both the level of her understanding of child development, and her attitude of engagement with the problems arising later in foster care, when children were older and parents did not understand

the reasons for particular behaviours. She indicated to me that she felt strongly about the importance of her work and of communicating the information which she herself had learned on the master's programme. She was determined in her work and also very protective and defensive of it. Although I talked to H about her work, and although she asked me for help in finding some literature, I found it difficult to work with her collaboratively on the production of the material, which she was keeping under tight control. With the change in my research focus, I was able to learn from what H thought it was important to do in interaction with me.

I also found it difficult to become involved in training with C, a training officer who was based in another city most of the time. I had a sense that she would not think it appropriate for me to deliver training, and I was uncertain about her views on my being involved at all, for whatever reason (possibly to do with issues such as age or hierarchy or with her lack of confidence in me and what I could offer). In addition, it became clear that C (and H and others) had not been consulted about my presence in both the organisation and, especially, the training office, and that the relationships that those who had set up the arrangement for my presence had with these members of staff were not as effective as I had expected them to be. I could communicate with C only through an interpreter. It was difficult for me to bring in an interpreter from outside as it was preferred that another member of staff interpreted for me; this was how other members of non-Mandarin-speaking or non-English-speaking staff communicated with their colleagues. The implications of the cross-cultural

context for the methodology, and ethical research practice, are discussed in Chapter Three.

As time passed it became clear that the existing ways of working did not facilitate my involvement. I felt helpless in regard to, for example, how I could assist H to win over her colleagues, let alone trainees and others from outside, or how I could break down the levels of uncertainty, suspicion, fear and mistrust between C and myself. All of the trainers kept a high degree of control over their work; it now seems that I could only ever have worked as an assistant, doing odd jobs. That I could ever have expected to take on the role of co-trainer or collaborator in the preparation of materials now seems deeply unrealistic.

In addition, the staff seemed to be finding their way along a new and uncertain path, and so already had enough to do, without trying to work with an unfamiliar face that they were uncertain of and had not requested. I thought for a while that the March training course was going to be based on previous 'introduction to foster care' courses and, although it was spoken of as though it was a new course being run for the first time, my expectations were so wildly different to what I saw that I did not fully digest until after the course that it had been prepared from scratch by people who were not very confident about it. Again, my attention was drawn to the variation in representations of the work.

Assumption Three

I had assumed that I would be able to access institutional staff through Xorg's training activities and that I would be able to generate data relating to the changing roles of institutional staff and the practice of foster care. I had been told that different institutions and staff members were operating at different levels, depending on how long they had been working with Xorg, and that consequently a range of training was offered to meet the varying needs of institutional staff. It had been suggested in a telephone meeting prior to my departure that, although it would not be possible for an interpreter (that is another person from outside) to accompany me, it was understood that a member of Xorg staff would need to interpret for me, and that in fact they could even ask the most probing and difficult questions directly if it would be helpful. I thus assumed that relationships were good.

Again, in those early telephone negotiations, Xorg staff presented the organisation as having good working relationships with central and local government, and with child-welfare institutions in China; this was the dominant representation. However, with hindsight I can also see that in personal communications both before my arrival and during my time there, S kept telling me that I would be able to get the information I needed because I could interview Xorg staff. I sometimes thought that she had misunderstood my research, my aims, and the nature of data generation as opposed to the collection of information, but with hindsight I wonder whether she was communicating to me in these more informal interactions a different idea of

what would be possible. In the first part of my fieldwork, therefore, I was becoming aware of what was said at different times and what was being achieved with different audiences.

I had originally hoped to generate data with institutional staff, and I was keen to make use of the time when some were present in Xorg's training centre. At one point, when I was still adjusting my thinking about the focus of the research, I had presented B with some requests for opportunities for data generation, in order to answer my original research questions around understandings of foster care. I noted one of his responses, made in the training office, as follows:

B went on to say that it might be possible to get some feedback at the end of the course. He asked S who was doing the feedback form for the upcoming pilot training on attachment. S said that C and O were doing it. B said why not let E³ do it. S spoke to O about this [because B and O speak different languages] and she said it was no problem. I felt uncomfortable. I wondered if they understood that my idea was to include some questions for the purposes of getting information for my research, but that the bulk of the main part of the evaluation form should be theirs, done in the usual way. After B went out O seemed pretty cross. She spoke animatedly to S. I wondered why. She seemed to have different responses when B was in the room and when he wasn't.

(Fieldnote extract)

I felt deeply uncomfortable because I was concerned that C and O (one of the members of the China Social Work Association who was based part-time in

³ I refer to myself as E in the transcripts and data analysis, for the reasons discussed in the methodology chapter.

Xorg's offices from the middle of my fieldwork), with both of whom I had not built up particularly effective rapport, would think that I was evaluating, and judging, their performance. There may have been confusion here between different ideas of what a feedback form is, and about whether it is for gathering information about trainees' understanding or is for evaluating the success of the course. This possibly occurred as a result of different cultural understandings of who can offer 'feedback'.

In the end, I prepared my own questionnaire with four questions on it. O and C prepared a feedback form in the usual way. My questions were printed on a separate A4 sheet with boxes for answers. C gave out my questionnaire, as it had now become, at the end of the course. She apologised to the delegates, saying that it was embarrassing because the questionnaire contained such simple questions but that I did not understand the system in China. She then chatted to some of the delegates as the forms were being completed; their conversation was conducted in part in Shanghai dialect, which neither my interpreter nor I could understand. Then she came over and asked me whether she could have copies of the completed forms as she thought they would be very interesting and useful. The journey towards the data was uncomfortable and included considerable discomfort and apparent embarrassment for the member of staff who facilitated it for me, although she seemed very interested in the results. Actions and interactions such as those in this example, and how they differed to other representations of Xorg's work and of its relationships with others, became more important and more prominent in the data I was able

to generate than the trainees' understanding of foster care, which had been my original focus.

All of these challenges to my assumptions about what I was going to be able to do were informative about the way the organisation was constituted in different interactional contexts. Most importantly, however, it became clear that my relationship with Xorg staff was at the heart of the data I was generating; they were performing for and with me. Analysing my own actions, including what I did with my own language – in both my fieldnotes and other types of language use – and how I created what was happening, became important, as will be discussed in Chapters Two and Three.

My research questions

The metamorphosis of my research questions thus involved a transition. I moved away from understanding the development of foster care in China through studying the training of family-placement workers, and from focusing on ideas about good care and the changing roles of institutional staff as they become family-placement workers. I moved towards a focus on representations and depictions of Xorg and its work, including the variation in accounts, and on how organisational and personal identities were entwined with how the organisation was socially constituted.

During the research journey described above, my research questions evolved into the following:

1. How were the actions of Xorg and its staff, during the fieldwork period and including those performed with me, related to Xorg's publicised undertaking of supporting work with children in state care in China?
2. How were the problem Xorg existed to address and the ways in which Xorg was addressing that problem constituted?
3. What kind of identity work was evident: what kinds of identities were being built and how?
4. How were relationships with others represented, and with what effect?

Conclusion

This chapter has depicted the environment in which INGOs working in child welfare in China operate, discussed my research journey and the development of the focus of my study, related how my presence in the organisation was set up and how my relationship with the organisation and its staff began, and examined the metamorphosis of my research objectives.

Chapter Two will situate the thesis within literature about a performance-based approach to identities and social constructionism, and will examine the relationship of this approach to literature about the social interactions that constitute development projects and NGOs. Chapter Three will discuss my methodology: an approach to ethnography focused on action, particularly the

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use of language. Chapters Four, Five and Six are the empirical chapters, which will discuss the social construction of success, the production of expert identities and moral authority, and the performative nature of the cultural context. Chapter Seven will conclude the thesis.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The central concern of this thesis is to provide some insight into how people in an international-development project in child welfare in China shape what kinds of actors they are through performances of identities. In the first part of Chapter One I painted a picture of the situation for INGOs operating in child welfare in China. I drew on representations of the contextual circumstances in literature from the fields of NGO studies, international social work, and child welfare in China, along with understandings offered by other available background information. The image evoked is of an environment which presents considerable challenges and in which it must be difficult for an organisation to carry out a programme of work. As was outlined in Chapter One, these challenges are connected to the position of INGOs, the social-policy context, and the existing arrangements for children in state care, including the current status of social work. What the existing literature can tell us is not unproblematic, given the particular assumptions written into accounts in terms of understandings of social change, relationships between policy and practice, and the ways in which INGO influence, for example, can be identified. Additionally problematic are the inevitably partial representations of the diversity of practice in China, much of which is, in any case, inaccessible to researchers, especially those publishing outside China. Chapter One, however, drew on that literature as indicative of key considerations when thinking about the context for Xorg's operations. In this chapter I shall move on to discuss literature pertaining to the central focus of my thesis: what kinds of actors

people working in an INGO in child welfare in China understand themselves to be.

Although Chapter One pointed out some of the claims that have been made about the Euro-North American influence on social work in China, partly through INGOs, this thesis will not examine these claims or evaluate their validity. Rather, the claims provide a justification for the importance of researching how actors understand themselves and what they are doing. Chapter One identified a series of research questions around the formation of the problem being addressed by Xorg, the kinds of identities being built in the context of addressing that problem, and the relationship of actions to the organisation's publicised undertaking of supporting work with children in state care in China. The way in which I shall address these questions in this thesis is by examining the identity work that is entwined with representations of the organisation and what it is doing. This chapter will situate the thesis within literature about a performance-based approach to identities and social constructionism, and will examine the relationship of this approach to literature about the social interactions that constitute development projects and NGOs.

Performance

In this thesis I am using the developments in understandings of performance that offer 'ways of comprehending how human beings fundamentally make culture, affect power, and reinvent their ways of being in the world [...]' performance as a way of *creation* and *being* as opposed to the long held notion of

performance as entertainment' (Madison and Hamera 2006 p. xii). The thesis is situated in that area of social science which makes use of theatre and performance metaphors to understand social action. Before discussing social constructionism and how performance-based research supports this approach, I shall illustrate the broad historical and theoretical context by outlining work by key theorists who have brought together performance and social science.

The work on ethnography and the performance of culture that is of relevance to this thesis is related to the 'crisis of representation' in anthropology. *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986) suggests how culture is made as it is written and advocates reflexive texts. Similarly, *The Predicament of Culture* (Clifford 1988) shows ethnography's 'reliance on improvised, historically contingent fictions' (p. 80) and how fieldwork must be seen as 'a historically contingent, unruly dialogical encounter involving to some degree both conflict and collaboration in the production of texts' (p. 90). The body of work these two key texts exemplify shows how the characteristics and boundaries of a culture are constructed. Central to my study is not the question of translation of and between pre-existing cultures, but rather the question of creative, cultural construction by me and members of Xorg staff, where culture is an active process.

The ethnographer and performance theorist Dwight Conquergood's essay on the performative turn in anthropology highlights key concepts from the theoretical background to my approach. He draws attention to 'the fabricated, invented, imagined, constructed nature of human realities' and points out that

cultures and selves are created and creative. This means that, 'Culture becomes an active verb, not a noun' (Conquergood 1989 p. 83). He also draws our attention to power, saying:

Because it is public, performance is a site of struggle where competing interests intersect, and different viewpoints and voices get articulated. [...] How does performance reproduce, legitimate, uphold, or challenge, critique, and subvert ideology [...] and] simultaneously reproduce and struggle against hegemony?

(Conquergood 1989 p. 84)

These ideas encourage the question of how the INGO in child welfare in China that I have studied, and its staff, are both created and creative through communication; the ideas also encourage an exploration of how ways of doing things and talking about things are reinforced or questioned in and around the organisation. Conquergood's essay is important for this thesis as it highlights the significance of process, rather than anything fixed.

Conquergood was influenced by the anthropologist Victor Turner's work on culture as performance and he credits Turner with having 'subversively redefined the fundamental terms of discussion in ethnography by defining humankind as *homo performans*, humanity as performer, a culture-inventing, social-performing, self-making and self-transforming creature' (Conquergood 1991 p. 187). The performance paradigm that embraces such ideas around creativity is useful in the way that it locates the ethnographer in the data generated. As Conquergood says, 'It situates ethnographers within the delicately negotiated and fragile "face-work" that is part of the intricate and nuanced dramaturgy of everyday life' (Conquergood 1991p. 187). Here, Conquergood is making a link to uses of performance in sociology by drawing

on the work of the sociologist Goffman. Goffman took theatrical metaphors and ideas around impression management and applied them in thinking about performance in everyday life, providing the basis for the idea that identities are produced for or with an audience and that they are therefore contingent and changing (Goffman 1959). The performance of identities is an idea that originated largely in his work.

The performance of language is another strand of performance-based research informing my study. Carlson's survey of theorists in this field brings together those whose work focuses on the function of language and what language accomplishes. This includes Chomsky's separation of knowledge of language (i.e. competence) from use of language (i.e. performance); Hymes's development of functional linguistics; and Bakhtin's development of the concept of the 'utterance', which echoes the words of others while being used in a new context. Theories around the performance of language have also developed from Austin, Searle and Kristeva's work on speech acts, which also theorised the performative function of language (Carlson 2004 pp. 58-63).

A key concept in the performance of language is citationality. Derrida uses the idea of iterability to argue that performative utterances work because they are recognisable although they are being adapted for the new context, and Butler argues that the performance of gender is also citational (Carlson 2004 pp. 75-9). Butler uses performativity to study the apparent stability of an identity, while showing how it is constructed and so could be done differently, and also

extends the concept beyond the linguistic (Hamera and Conquergood 2006 p. 422). As Carlson summarises:

Performance and performativity are deeply involved both with the reinforcement and the dismantling of stable systems of meaning and representation [... and] are always involved with a sense of doubleness, of the repetition of some pattern of action or mode of being in the world already in existence [...].

(Carlson 2004 p. 80)

While my study is an ethnographic one focusing on all forms of action, I emphasise the role of language. I take the view that, 'Language produces and constructs our experience of each other and ourselves' (Burr 2003 p. 62). I draw on approaches to culture that are performance based and rooted in social-constructionist epistemology. Social-constructionist epistemology was developed in part by Berger and Luckmann, who articulated the idea that people are continually constructing the world, forming a reality with which individuals negotiate as they interact with each other in the achievement of everyday life and the ongoing process of construction (Berger and Luckmann 1967). Key ideas in social constructionism are that knowledge is culturally specific and the meanings of actions, including speech, are related to the cultural context; that reality is made up of and formed by language and signs; and that language is a form of social action.

Bauman and Briggs review how 'in the late 1970s and early 1980s [...] a new emphasis on performance directed attention [...] to the emergence of verbal art in the social interaction between performers and audiences' (Bauman and Briggs 1990 pp. 59-60). They highlight how performance-based research supports the study of language as social action and the social construction of

reality, especially through the move from context to contextualisation in the sense of contexts emerging in interaction (Maybin 2006). A performance-based approach supports the social-constructionist idea that culture is made up of what is created in communication. As Goodman and Monaghan explain:

[... a] *performance-based approach* to communication and culture [...] emphasizes the dynamic and creative role language plays in the construction of social reality. From a performance perspective, it is not enough to say that communication is culturally constituted. In other words, culture isn't just a lens or a frame through which we interpret the communication that goes on inside it. Culture is also communicatively constituted. Language itself helps to create culture. By the ways we use language, we can bring culture into being.

(Goodman and Monaghan 2007 p. 3)

This idea that culture is created in communication and in interaction is important in my research because it highlights relationships of all kinds, including the dialogical dynamics of fieldwork and my relationships with others, and also because it helps me to ask how Xorg comes into being as a development project through interaction.

One of the debates in performance-based research is between the degree of emphasis placed on following a script and the degree of emphasis placed on improvisation. For example, while Goffman is associated with social constructionism, his use of metaphors such as 'scripts' (Goffman 1959) places less emphasis on the way a social performance is contrived for a specific purpose. Social-constructionist approaches to performance tend to avoid the use of 'script' metaphors. As Carlson states:

'Social constructionism' thus hypothesizes that patterns of social performance are not 'given in the world' or 'pre-scripted' by the culture, but are constantly constructed, negotiated, reformed, fashioned and organized out of scraps of 'recipe knowledge,' a pragmatic piecing together of pre-existing scraps of material recalling the process French theorists have called *bricolage*.

(Carlson 2004 p. 44)

Chapter Two: Literature Review

I am following this emphasis on how actions are being performed in a more improvised manner in a new situation. My research is also informed by Gergen's approach to social constructionism, which involves a relational perspective (Gergen 1999; 2009). The relational perspective understands knowledge and moral positions to be generated and negotiated within relationships, and meaning to be generated from what is shared in communication. This perspective incorporates the historical context and the audience for the performance. As Gergen explains:

[...] our expressions gain their intelligibility from a cultural history. In the same way I cannot make sense if I use a word that I myself have made up, my actions will not make sense if they do not borrow from a cultural background. Thus, when I perform I am carrying a history of relationships, manifesting them, expressing them. [...] when we speak about psychological states ('I want...', 'he feels...', 'she thinks...') we are always addressing someone – either explicitly or implicitly – within some kind of relationship. To say that performances are addressed is also to say that they are fashioned with respect to the recipient.

(Gergen 1999 p. 133)

Gergen's work enables me to focus on action that 'is constituted within and gains its intelligibility through relationship' and on performances as 'constituents of relationship; they are inhabited not only by a history of relationships but as well by the relationships into which they are directed' (Gergen 1999 p. 133).

In general then, social-constructionist studies focus on interaction, processes and what people do in practice, and they are concerned with contested meanings. While actions, especially talk, reflect the dominant ideas of a society and culture, there are also possibilities for contestation and change. My work is an application of this theory to the area of international-development activity

by an NGO. It has similarities with Hilhorst's ethnography of the everyday politics of a Philippine NGO, which uses a process-based understanding of organisations:

It is not clear in advance how the different meanings of an organization coincide, interact, dominate, facilitate or divide. This implies that students of NGOs must shift their attention away from organizational features, structures and reports to the everyday practices of the social actors in and around the organization. Rather than taking organizations at face value, we have to ask and observe how the claims and performances of NGOs acquire meaning in practice. NGOs are not things, but processes, and instead of asking what an NGO is, the more appropriate question then becomes how 'NGO-ing' is *done*.

(Hilhorst 2003 pp. 4-5)

This thesis asks 'how NGO-ing is done'. However, the theoretical position that I take considers reports and the language in reports, for example, not to be a neutral reflection of reality but actively to construct the social setting. I argue that it is possible to use organisational reports, which form one part of my data. Rather than taking them at face value, which, I agree with Hilhorst, is unproductive, I shall look at what is done by the language in those texts, too. I shall look at key processes in the data captured, and in the construction of Xorg.

Social constructionism in the field of international development has been most visible in work at the level of what Burr calls 'macro social constructionism', which refers to 'forms of social constructionism that focus on the constructive force of culturally available discourses, and the power relations embedded within these' (Burr 2003 p. 203). At this level, development is understood as a discourse of power that constructs 'Third World' problems requiring intervention with knowledge from 'the West' (Crush 1995; Escobar 1995). This understanding resonates with the notion of the colonial gaze as a way in which

the world has become known, in addition to the understanding of colonialism as a conquest of territory and resources (Simpson 2005 p. 63).

This approach of understanding development as a discourse is Foucauldian and emphasises the power of the 'First World' or 'developed world' over the 'Third World' or 'developing world' and how the discourse organises and defines action. Development is:

[...] a political enterprise in which First World development agencies and institutions engage in defining problems and designing interventions aimed at effecting change in the Third World. [...] knowledge about development is filtered through structures of power and control, then expressed in discourses shaped by these structures [...].

(Waters 2000 p. 91)

This means that as discourse produces knowledge, it influences social practices.

From a Foucauldian perspective, the discourse of 'the West and the Rest' affected the actions of "the West" towards "the Rest" (Hall 1992).

More recent work on development has used Foucault's later concept of 'governmentality' (Burchell, Gordon et al. 1991). This is based on a different and more positive understanding of power, in which discourses and knowledge are internalised by individuals who govern themselves. As Mosse and Lewis explain, in relation to development:

[...] critical analysis of development has moved on from its earlier, intensely value-laden deconstruction of policy narratives. It now directs closer attention to development's routines, practices, and subjectivities [...] Development policy, then, can function to regulate social life not by overt control or repression, but by a productive form of power that enrolls and empowers supporters, and that operates in multiple and unpredictable ways to build its 'orders.'

(Lewis and Mosse 2006 p. 6)

This method of understanding development and this conceptualisation of development policy involve moving away from development as a discourse with a more coercive kind of power, in order to give more attention to local practices in development and to the acknowledgement of unpredictability. This move is important because it challenges the idea that Western development institutions hold all the power and acknowledges and examines the power and agency of all actors in development projects. Nevertheless, the interest is still in the effects of power wielded by development projects and how the power of a project enrolls supporters. What I shall do in this study is emphasise how actors use language flexibly for rhetorical purposes at a micro level. This acknowledges the inconsistency and contradiction within and between texts and conversations, and shows how identities are constructed in fragmentary ways. This is in line with what Burr calls 'micro social constructionism', which refers to 'forms of social constructionism that focus on the construction of accounts and personal identities within interpersonal interactions' (Burr 2003 p. 203). I shall contribute to understandings of being an actor in international development that are more diverse than those generated at a more macro level of analysis.

By using the concept of performance, I can look at how projects are created in an ongoing, more improvisational way, rather than at how they are defined by more coercive, wider discourses. This approach has similarities with the work of Lewis and Mosse, in that these authors exemplify how literature in the

anthropology of development has begun to draw on understandings of performance in the construction of reality:

[...] powerful actors offer scripts into which others can be recruited for a period. In this sense their interpretations are performative. [...] Our concern becomes, then, not how actors operate and strategize *within* existing arrangements of development (or between its institutions and society), but how development projects – always unforeseeable – become real through the work of generating and translating interests, creating context by tying in supporters and so sustaining interpretations.

(Lewis and Mosse 2006 p. 13)

This approach uses the performance metaphor of scripts, which was highlighted above in relation to the tension between the following of the script and improvisation in the social construction of reality. Their emphasis is on the different interests of different parties being enrolled in a project. In this thesis I shall look at how fairly short sections of text position selves and others. My approach foregrounds how language is used flexibly and draws on positions rather than scripts. Positioning theory explains 'local moral orders as ever-shifting patterns of mutual and contestable rights and obligations of speaking and acting' (Harré and Van Langenhove 1999 p. 1). Positionings may be constructed in passing and may be momentary; they are more flexible than scripts. Positionings may be accepted but can be rejected. As in the approach of Taylor and Littleton, 'speakers are understood to be already positioned within larger social formations but also active in their identity work and able, within constraints, to position themselves and negotiate new positionings' (2008 p. 279). In this thesis I shall ask how the creators of texts position themselves and others, including other individuals, and other organisations and institutions. I shall also ask what is achieved or suggested by the way relationships are represented. I shall look at the stability and changeability visible within and between

particular performances which construct Xorg and the identities of those in and around it.

The use of ideas about performance in work on international development is important because it supports a move away from viewing the relationships between policy and practice and between intentions and outcomes in development work in terms of the quality of implementation. Instead, it furthers a focus on the social processes around policy and the relationships in which everyday performances create a development project. This move to a focus on social processes resonates with the idea of looking at the construction of reality through relationships and what happens in interactions. How a project is created in interactions obligates an interrogation of the relationship between policy and practice. Mosse's ethnography of aid policy and practice asks the crucial questions of 'what if development practice is not driven by policy?'; 'what if the things that make for good policy are quite different from those that make it implementable?'; and 'what if the practices of development are in fact concealed rather than produced by policy?' (Mosse 2005 p. 2). I am following Mosse's interest in how the practices of development unfold. I am taking a more micro approach, however, particularly through the discursive construction of development work. I am asking how the actions of Xorg and its staff, during the fieldwork period and including those performed with me, related to Xorg's publicised undertaking of supporting work with children in state care in China.

The project Mosse studied 'did not work *because* it turned policy into reality. Rather, it sustained policy models offering a significant interpretation of the situation' (Mosse 2005 p. 231). He develops a conceptual tool of the polysemic and ambiguous master metaphor, which allows different understandings of key concepts to be encompassed and prevents the disruption of consensus about the project's success. In this study I am taking up this interest in the construction of an interpretation of the situation, and I am asking how the problem Xorg existed to address and the ways in which Xorg was addressing that problem were constituted. Mosse focuses on the social aspect of policy ideas, especially enrolment (of supporters) and persuasion (to sell the 'problem-solution'), and on 'the interlocking intentionalities of the developers and the "to-be-developed"' (Mosse 2005 p. viii). I shall place less emphasis on intentionality in the action to persuade supporters, and I shall look more at how texts show variability and multiple positionings and how, sometimes, these can be seen in short passages of text. I shall look at what is not unidirectional and at variation in the construction of accounts and identities in interaction.

In summary, some social-constructionist approaches to development work and NGOs start at the macro level and look at the global structures and discourses within which problems and interventions are constructed. In contrast, I shall follow the developing interest in performance in the study of development activity and look at constructions of Xorg's work in interactions at the micro level. This level includes how members of Xorg staff represent their work, how they perform their relationships with others, and how they contextualise what

they are saying or doing. At this more micro level, I am interested in how actors understand themselves and their work and, hence, the performance of identities.

Identities

In line with a social-constructionist approach, as was explained above, I am focusing on discursive constructions of individual and organisational identities. I am following the idea that 'methods of making sense are the key to any kind of explanation of the self, as people's sense of themselves is in fact a conglomerate of these methods, produced through talk and theorizing' (Potter and Wetherell 1987 p. 102). This understanding of identities embraces the idea of performances of different identities being produced in accordance with different contexts. I am drawing on the discursive psychology outlined by Wetherell, which:

[...] attempts to describe the configurations of identity and subjectivity which result at particular moments and which might be maintained for shorter and longer durations. It also attempts to describe the cultural resources, struggles, interactions and relations that the person is working with and how these have been mobilised, temporarily stabilised and turned into their own personal order.

(Wetherell 2007 p. 672)

Identities, therefore, are not fixed, stable markers of who people intrinsically are, but are, instead, created out of the way people act at different times. Identities are fluid, changing and variable. They are negotiated, reworked and altered as people interact and define their positions and represent how they are the same as, and different from, others. In summary, I am using a model of the person in line with a social-constructionist approach:

The different forms of social constructionism [...] abandon essentialism in favour of construction; they replace traditional psychology's emphasis upon coherence and unity with fragmentation and multiplicity; and they remove the forum for psychological life out of the individual's head and into the social, interpersonal realm. Social

Chapter Two: Literature Review

constructionism, then, replaces the self-contained, pre-social and unitary individual with a fragmented and changing, socially produced phenomenon who comes into existence and is maintained not inside the skull but in social life.

(Burr 2003 p. 104)

This model of the person means that identities are what people do rather than who they are, as also shown by Butler (1990). Using the example of gender, she says, 'There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; [...] identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results' (p. 34). This work on gender as performance has been applied to other identities, and it importantly highlights the view that as identities are not naturally and inevitably occurring, they can be done differently.

In the analysis of the texts in my data, I understand being an actor in international development to be a discursive accomplishment that is achieved in negotiation with others, and to be a relation that individuals have with others. What it means to be an actor in international development is constantly being worked out, and people understand themselves through their interactions with each other. Actions, including talk, reflect the dominant ways of doing things, being to an extent determined by the discursive resources available, and the identities performed are often habitual. However, there are also possibilities for challenging and changing the usual ways of acting.

The micro approach I am using emphasises agency to a greater degree than the more Foucauldian approaches discussed earlier in this chapter. It is possible to see how actors use and respond to the possibilities and constraints offered by different positionings. Nevertheless, the extent of change, the taking up of new

positionings, and the building of new constructions of identities in any given context can be limited. A study of the negotiation of agency in personal identity work highlights:

[...] the complexity of working with changing cultural expectations [...] while participants worked with new resources that allowed them to appear active and empowered, they continued to draw on older discursive resources thus challenging the extent of autonomy and agency in identity work.

(Reynolds, Wetherell et al. 2007 p. 348)

This observation has implications for action in international development, which is an arena imbued with ideas of making a difference and even achieving transformations in the field of work. I shall look at the different ways in which people represent doing things in identity work.

I am applying the idea of identity work in a particular way, in that I am using it to understand the construction of both organisational and personal identities, which I consider to be entwined. My approach is in line with social-constructionist studies that understand an organisation to be a discursive space and that understand organisational discourse in terms of struggles for meaning (Grant and Hardy 2003 pp. 5-6). From this perspective, organisations and what happens in them are produced through actions, including talk. While individuals talk about the organisation and what is happening in and around it they position themselves as part of, or in relation to, the organisation. The production of organisations is thus entangled with the production of organisational and individual identities, and all of these are in flux. I understand organisations to be active processes of creation in relation to and in interaction with others, to be different things at different moments, and to be

open-ended. In this thesis I am addressing the question of what kind of identity work was evident: what kinds of identities were being built and how? My work will show how organisations are created in the interactions of their interlocutors. I shall explore how texts address questions of identity and work up identities as they explain and account for the work of the organisation.

Thus I am taking a particular perspective on understanding what the organisation is doing, which foregrounds the construction of identities. Mosse's work argues that 'interventions in development are importantly about establishing, promoting and defending significant interpretations [of actions and events]' (Mosse 2005 p. xii). This idea shifts the focus of what we are looking at, of what is being done by an INGO, away from the implementation of policy to the creation of the project in other ways. This latter notion is a crucial idea in line with which I am situating my work. However, I shall place less emphasis on intentionally coherent interpretations and focus on the how accounts contain contradictions as identities are worked up in representations of the organisation's work.

Having outlined my understanding of identities in general, in the remaining part of this chapter I shall introduce literature pertaining to the kinds of identities that are performed in the data I shall examine in the empirical chapters. Successful and authoritative identities in the particular cultural context emerge strongly in my data, and I shall focus especially on the different constructions of these.

Like Mosse (2005), I am using social constructionism to examine success and show how the creation of success is a key activity. Mosse develops a framework for how development projects construct success through '(i) establishing a compelling interpretation of events, (ii) sustaining this as a key representation (through model building, reporting and field visits), and (iii) enrolling a wider network of supporters and their agendas' (pp. 158-9). While following Mosse's idea, I shall add to the literature by focusing more on how representations of the organisation's work are not always unidirectional, and I shall emphasise the unintentional. Rather than looking at the enrolment of various parties in the organisation's work, I shall show how representations of the work are context-driven at the micro level and how different interactional contexts have different implications for the building of successful identities.

Bringing together the different foci of existing literature suggests how an organisation's success can be constructed in ways that are very different from each other. An analysis of annual reports and annual reviews of UK charities (Xorg is a registered charity in the UK) found that:

[...] the content of the annual reviews [the narrative reporting part of an annual report] often appears to be centred on what will make 'a good story' and 'an interesting read' rather than an objective, transparent account of developments within the organisation [...] the absence of performance-type information and the focus on activities-based information suggests that charities seek to demonstrate the legitimacy of their activities to external stakeholders on the basis of the activities and projects in which they engage, rather than on the reported difference that they have made to the communities that they serve [...].

(Connolly and Dhanani 2009 p. 7)

This analysis suggests that documents that may be expected to report what the charity has achieved are in fact built around the nature of the work, in terms of the idea behind it and the legitimacy of that in theory. It is, of course, challenging to measure and identify social change. While theirs is not a social-constructionist approach, Connolly and Dhanani (2009) highlight a concern that influences how an organisation is created in a particular text. Xorg's annual reports are part of my dataset. Connolly and Dhanani's work is of interest and relevance to my research because it suggests that the content in a document such as an annual review, with the imagined audiences it brings, shows a concern with building the legitimacy of the organisation's actions and operations.

Concerns with legitimacy have also been shown to be central to everyday action in NGOs:

Conceiving of 'NGO' as a claim-bearing label opens an avenue to studying the everyday politics of NGO legitimation. Through everyday politics, NGO actors negotiate the meaning of their organization and enrol outsiders into accepting it. Acquiring legitimation as 'an organization that is doing good for the development of others' is no easy job. It entails first convincing others that a situation or population needs development. Second, it requires convincing others that the intervention of the NGO is indispensable and appropriate, and that it has no self-interest in the envisaged programme. Third, it requires convincing others that the NGO is able and reliable, in other words, trustworthy and capable of carrying out the intervention. For NGO actors, the legitimation of their organization is a matter of (organizational) survival. The main asset of an NGO is its reputation as an organization doing good for the development of others, and earning and maintaining this reputation is a major occupation of NGO actors.

(Hilhorst 2003 p. 7)

My research questions address the construction of the problem Xorg existed to address and the ways it was addressing that problem. I am interested in what actors think is important in order to achieve Hilhorst's three points: that there is a problem; that the NGO is important in solving it; and that the NGO is able,

reliable, trustworthy and capable. I shall look at how these ideas are constructed at the micro level by the identity and positioning work performed in different contexts with different audiences.

One important audience for whom NGOs perform successful and authoritative identities is the funding world. Much research documents the influence of funders on NGOs. However, NGOs also resist funders, and this tension can impact on the representation of the organisation's work. Ebrahim (2003) shows:

First [...] that the information requirements of funders impact NGOs not only by placing demands on their attention, but also by promoting positivist and easily quantifiable valuations of success and failure. [...] Second, [...] NGOs resist funder attempts to structure their behaviour through a series of strategies including the 'symbolic' generation of information in order to satisfy funder needs, the selective sharing of information in order to protect their core activities from unwanted interference, and the strategic use of professionals to enhance legitimacy.

(Ebrahim 2003p. 78)

This quotation suggests considerations to take into account when examining the construction of the organisation in interaction with and in relation to others through text. Ebrahim's findings emphasise that a text is speaking to a range of possible audiences; in this case these are suggested to be funders quantifying success and failure, and funders who may interfere and 'structure' NGO behaviour. His work suggests a fear of interference and, again, a concern with justification of actions and legitimacy.

At the other extreme, the literature also indicates that representations of what kind of actors people and organisations are, especially in terms of successful and authoritative identities, involves promising revolutionary change and the metamorphosis of the field of work. Feeling obliged to promise transformation,

that is to over-promise, is associated with the pressures of marketisation and professionalisation in the field of development (Mowles 2007). This has implications for the addressing of the complexities of daily work. Mowles finds that there is a tendency 'to privilege the idealised future over dealing with the very real anxieties and difficulties that staff had articulated or wanted to articulate about their everyday working experiences' (2007 p. 407). I shall explore how actors manage complexities and anxieties, as well as more idealistic visions, in their identity work.

Over-promising, with the consequent possibilities for failure, has implications for identities. Mosse (2007) understands failure in terms of the 'unravelling of professional identities':

Failure may be regarded as the irruption of precisely those things that professionalism necessarily suppresses – events, contingency, relationships. [...] success buries the individual action or event and makes a project a unified source of intention and power directing attention to the transcendent agency of policy and expert design (and hence replicability) [...]. Failure points to the contingent, the arbitrary, the accidental, the exceptional, the unintended; it indicates particular events (drought, illness, corruption [...]). By releasing the anecdotal, failure can unravel the work of expertise and professionalism; it may license expression of suppressed and scattered doubts, drawing attention to the informal processes underlying official actions. [...] While stories of success emphasise the system and expert ideas (they are theory-rich), those of failure are inherently event rich.

(Mosse 2007 p. 11)

This passage highlights events, contingency, and relationships, in relation to failure. Mosse sees success as something unidirectional – it is 'a unified source of intention and power'. Using my micro approach, I shall look at contingency in the building of identities more generally.

The literature thus indicates a range of concerns that could have implications for the building of successful and authoritative identities. It also suggests that in regard to the issue of what an organisation is doing and what kinds of actors the organisation and individuals are, there is a gap in representations and depictions by organisations of their activities, between establishing the foundation for the organisations' work and the legitimacy of the activity on the one hand, and the over-promising of the transformation that will result on the other. This is a wide spectrum encompassing defensive and overstated claims. In this thesis I shall recognise times when people do not act in a unidirectional way and construct the organisation in diverse ways, including those whereby they sell the organisation's success and those whereby they give a more complex view of what they are trying to do and are more hesitant. I shall also look at contingency and relationships in the building of knowledge and of expert and morally authoritative identities.

As was indicated in the first part of this chapter, my theoretical approach considers knowledge to be made out of relationships and that who people understand themselves to be in moments of interaction shapes ideas and the production of knowledge. The performance of identities is thus closely linked to knowledge, and knowledge is at the heart of international-development activity. This link is relevant to the performances of expert identities and moral authority in my data. Development is often argued to be 'a knowledge industry':

There have been and are many different visions of development – as self-help, as solidarity, as 'civilising mission', as colonial self-interest, as economic development, as

modernisation, as part of global integration. All visions, no matter how top-down or directive, view development as a process which involves change for the better, however defined, which in turn involves people doing things differently.

(Powell 2006 p. 519)

This quotation highlights the centrality of the production of knowledge to development, by highlighting change, which 'involves people doing things differently'. The literature on international development offers a critique of treating knowledge as if it were neutral and also demonstrates interest in multiple knowledges and the implications of how they interact for social change (Leach, Sumner et al. 2008). As Powell states:

The crucial point that needs to be made about 'knowledge' in relation to development is that there is no universal understanding of what it is. We all 'know' the world through a combination of our education, language, culture, and belief and, just as importantly, our actual physical realities – gender, location, socio-economic environment. How life is 'known' – that is, how it is experienced and understood – inevitably varies profoundly according to these differences. The issue for anyone working on development issues cannot be simply how to deal with 'knowledge', but how to act effectively in an environment of multiple 'knowledges'.

(Powell 2006 p. 521)

This highlighting of the relationship between how life is experienced and understood, and knowledge, supports my focus on the performance of identities, and I am situating this thesis in line with work on knowledge, relationships and identities in international development (Pottier 2003; Desai 2006). Desai explores how a development organisation works through an examination of 'the social dimension of knowledge and its role in the formation of identities of individuals and organisations' (2006 p. 173). She considers knowledge and identities to be entwined, and I shall follow this approach.

Desai argues that 'individual relationships and development practice shape policy in a way that makes an isolated analysis of strategic and policy changes

in national and local context inadequate' (2006 p. 188). This argument supports the logic of my own work as 'the analytical focus is drawn away from organizations' and programs' structures and approaches toward the internal processes, by studying the practices and daily realities their agents engage in' (p. 188). In this thesis I shall look at how people in Xorg represent development practices and the interaction between themselves and those with whom they are working. Desai argues that:

[NGO staff] have to negotiate their professional and self-perceptions on a daily basis. Since the fieldworkers constantly navigate between crucial interfaces within their institutions and in villages, their understanding of themselves, of agricultural extension, and of society as a whole is crucial to institutional change.

(Desai 2006 p. 188)

My approach is similar, however I shall focus not on identities in the interfaces between different parties on the ground, but on how identities are performed as interfaces and interactions are represented in texts and in the detail of language, including in interviews and organisational documents, and as captured in my fieldnotes.

The construction of knowledge in relationships also forms the basis for concepts such as 'learning with' that feature in the literature. Wilson distinguishes 'learning from' and 'learning with':

In the former, the stakeholders learn things that are already known by those they are learning from, whereas in the latter their learning jointly creates knowledge. Further, the implication is that 'learning from' is limiting as it involves recycling existing knowledge, which in turn is framed by contemporary dominant discourses. 'Learning with', however, is epistemologically different, being concerned with producing new knowledge. 'Learning from' can proceed from passive engagement, but 'learning with' is necessarily an active process of mutual engagement that allows space for expanding the boundaries of what is known.

(Wilson 2007 p. 193)

Knowledge processes in development are highly complex. They are entwined with questions of authority, including moral and expert identities. International development has a moral foundation. As Tvedt points out, the 'international aid system':

[...] was based on an ethical and normative argument that is very difficult to contest on moral grounds: 'It is morally right that people who have a lot should give some of what they have to those who have far too little'. Unlike other international systems, this system thus has a moral foundation that is morally impossible to question. This makes this system unique, and it is partly this uniqueness that gives its actors their moral and political capital.

(Tvedt 2006 p. 682)

This foundation has, of course, been entangled with complicated questions about what constitutes desirable social change, and, often, this has been answered in terms of universal and unilinear notions of progress suggesting that we are all on the same path. Despite the availability of processes such as 'learning with', more hierarchical conceptions of expert authority are prominent and are entwined with hierarchies of power and the question of who has what knowledge.

The notion of expertise encompasses ontological assumptions – especially the assumption of 'a *knowable* and unequivocally *re-presentable* world "out there"'; epistemological approaches – where in addition to 'competing *formal* expertise' there exists 'experiential, local, or tacit knowledge that arises from personal experience and exploration outside the confines of educational institutions'; and power inequalities 'between the possessors of differing knowledge forms' (Brand and Karvonen 2007 p. 23). The power of formal expertise over local knowledge is recognised in work which suggests that some performances of

expert identities can work against the acknowledgement of multiple knowledges and practices such as 'learning with'. Mosse (2007) suggests:

[...] the work of professionals of all kinds is precisely to establish (against experience) the notion that 'global knowledge' produced by international organisations occupies a transcendent realm 'standing above' particular contexts [...] Indeed these notions of scale, time and application are constitutive of international professional identities in development.

(Mosse 2007 p. 2)

Mosse's focus is at a more macro level on experts within the international aid system. In particular, he looks at the power of ideas:

[... in] aid systems that have the political need to explain how social and governmental orders can be reorganized by international policy and aid. The structures of representation that define the accepted interpretation of what is going on and what can be accomplished (currently neoliberal institutionalist ones) have to be kept in place. And to this end experts (including anthropologists) are needed in order to disembed theory from practice discursively so as to preserve a sphere of rational intention that can appear as external to and generative of events [...].

(Mosse 2008 p. 120)

This view suggests how identities, as well as knowledge, are connected to structures at the macro level. In this study I shall look more at the relational aspect at the micro level and at how identities are constructed in interactions. I look at how expert identities are constructed in moments of time and at how representations of expert and moral authority can be fluid and changing at the micro level. I shall examine how relationships with others – including those for whom the development programmes are said to be run – are represented and at how positions are negotiated in different kinds of texts. This approach uses the understanding of knowledge as made in relationships. It shows how the identities of staff are enmeshed with their constructions of what they are doing and the production of knowledge. I shall look at expert identities and moral authority in terms of more personal or local accounts, and at what these can contribute to addressing the question of how workers in international-

development projects understand themselves and what they are doing, which is the thrust of my thesis.

The neoliberal agenda is argued to have impacted on the identities of experts in development. For example, a lack of local contextual knowledge is attributed to that agenda:

[...] in which particular technical skills are becoming envisaged as universal and not necessarily requiring such contextual specificities. The experts who possess these techniques thus appear to move unproblematically between and within countries, taking with them their particular expertise, but often with limited knowledge of the different historical, social and cultural contexts in which they are required to apply it.

(Kothari 2005 p. 43)

Kothari's work is concerned with cultural imperialism enacted through the development expert, including the maintenance of authority through what is understood as the discourse of humanitarianism (Power 2005 p. 211), an ethical discourse which depoliticises development interventions. The convincing depiction of development as 'a technical process of intervention that maintains the legitimacy and authority of Western modernity' (Kothari 2005 p. 50) emphasises how knowledge can be seen as universal rather than local. While Kothari is critical of the idea that 'what counts as professional expertise in development is not primarily founded on in-depth geographic knowledge about other places and people, but is located in technical know-how' (Kothari 2005 p. 36), the question of what in-depth, geographic knowledge about other places and people would look like remains difficult to answer, however.

What is of interest for this study is how international actors understand their position and how they represent people and places in processes of

contextualisation. My fieldwork was set in what some may describe as a 'cross-cultural' situation in which there are borders between cultures, ethnicities and nationalities. However, none of these are fixed and unchanging. Louie's writing about Chinese culture makes the point that while debates about 'Asian values' and the 'essential Chineseness' that is part of Chinese culture eulogise practices common to many societies, such as honouring the family, older people and hard work, 'the only safe statement we can make about it is that it is vague and forever changing' (Louie 2008 p. 17). My theoretical approach avoids essentialising other people and places, and I shall pay attention to the performative nature of the cultural context.

Talk and written texts draw on many ideas about what is Chinese, or what is British or international, and about what can or cannot be said about a culture. Furthermore, they create the cultural context in many ways that do not map onto ethnicities or nationalities. In this study I shall examine the ideas that are important in certain situations and the implications of the way different ideas feature in the data. I shall reflect on processes of contextualisation that construct the setting and the conditions for Xorg's work and occur as part of the performance of identities. The cultural context is constructed in various ways – not only in terms of ethnicities and nationalities but also, for example, in terms of the cultures of child-welfare institutions and those outside them. I use 'a dynamic concept of culture as a practice of negotiating cultural differences, and of cultural overlap' (Bachmann-Medick 2006 p. 37). I avoid an assumption of dichotomy between different cultures and focus on how the cultural context is

performed. In line with the ideas about the performance of culture discussed in the first part of this chapter, I shall look at how culture is made and the tensions that are visible in that process.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I am situating my thesis within the body of literature from anthropology and sociology that brings together performance and social science, especially in regard to the performance of language. I am applying social-constructionist theory to the subject of international-development activity by an NGO, and I am building on recent work on performance and international development by taking up the possibilities presented in the existing literature for understanding the creation of a development project through everyday performances in relationships. I am locating the thesis in line with studies concerned with the discursive construction of development work.

I am drawing on approaches which understand being an actor in international development to be something which is constantly being worked out in interactions with others. I am taking the stance that the identities of staff are intertwined with their constructions of what they are doing and the production of knowledge. I am engaging with literature which is concerned with the link between knowledge, relationships and identities. I am following the understanding of organisations as a discursive space and I am taking the view that organisational and personal identities are entwined as actors represent the problem they are addressing and the importance and capability of the NGO

and its staff in solving it. I am using literature which provides illustrative examples of the wide range of concerns that have implications for the building of identities, especially successful and authoritative identities, in different contexts – in different types of texts and in relation to different audiences – and I shall link this range of concerns to a consideration of the variation in accounts.

I am employing the micro social-constructionist approach identified in the literature to look at accounts and the building of identities in detail, and especially at personal, local accounts and how actors both use language flexibly for rhetorical purposes and take up various positions in short sections of text. I am making use of those approaches that are informed by how identities are variable and fragmentary as they are performed in different interactional contexts at the micro-level, and how the context itself is constructed in processes of contextualisation.

The next chapter will discuss my methodological approach and the tools I am using to carry out this examination of the performance of identities in the social interactions which constitute Xorg and in which actors make sense of what they are doing.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter will outline my methodology and explain the decisions I made in order to achieve my research objectives. The study was set up as an ethnographic investigation and I shall discuss what this kind of project offers. I shall explain the further decisions I made in the field about what type of ethnography could address the revised research questions – an ethnography focused on action, particularly the use of language. The chapter will discuss my approach to data generation and analysis that integrates ethnographic methods with two approaches: firstly, with a constructionist approach to discourse, which identifies repertoires, is sensitive to interactional contexts, and focuses on the positions made available by discursive practices, and secondly, with an examination of narrative as another form of social action. In addition, the chapter will discuss the forms of data capture, the implications of the cross-cultural context, and ethical considerations in my research practice.

Chapter One explained my research journey and the metamorphosis of my research questions in the first part of my fieldwork. It described how my original research questions about changes in care for children living in state institutions had involved a number of assumptions: that I would be able to observe significant amounts of training and participate in the preparation of some materials; that foster care in China was developing fast and that Xorg was the place to find out about it; and that I would be able to access others, especially institutional staff, through Xorg. The central concern of my research

became how actors in Xorg shaped their identities in relation to Xorg's publicised undertaking of supporting work with children in state care in China. As I entered the field, the nature of my research questions developed in terms of constructions, representations, and performances, in line with my theoretical approach. The questions that the thesis addresses evolved into those which were presented at the end of Chapter One.

The focus of the study is on the performance of identities and on how identities, at the organisational and individual level, are constructed and performed in relationships. This focus includes performances by both others and me, and relationships between others and with me. I use the idea of performance in order to focus my attention not simply on constructions and representations in general, but on particular renditions of organisational activities at particular moments, learning from what is distinct about a performance at a particular instant and especially with a particular audience. I have used a methodology that is sensitive to the struggles within identity work.

Ethnography

My research began as an ethnographic study of the training of family-placement workers. Ethnography offers a way of understanding a given social setting based on sustained engagement with it. The practice of ethnography varies widely. All approaches share a concern with what is meaningful and important to the participants, but the processes used to access what is meaningful and important vary according to the epistemological and

ontological foundations of the research (Hammersley 2007). Some approaches to ethnography emphasise understanding the participants' points of view.

Ethnographers who emphasise experiences may be primarily concerned with representing participants' 'voices', and may place the participants' own perspectives at the centre; this approach leans towards looking at what people are saying rather than how they are saying it and what they accomplish by saying it. Other ethnographers maintain a tight focus on social action.

Ethnographers taking this stance wish to analyse what is achieved through actions (instead of being concerned with people's experiences). This perspective means that ethnographic and discourse-analytic methods can be complementary (Miller and Fox 2004). From this perspective, it is inadequate to focus on what people say and it is necessary to focus on *how* they say it. This study uses this latter approach, that is taking action, including talk, as the unit of analysis.

My ethnographic account is of one specific organisation, Xorg, during a specific period of time, February to June 2008. I offer my interpretation of social action in that organisation during that period of fieldwork. I write largely in the present tense in the empirical chapters, but I emphasise here the caveat that what I say is about the period of my fieldwork and is not intended to reify Xorg and the actors within it as fixed and unchanging over time. My ethnographic account is also one version of the activity and social interactions that constituted the organisation Xorg during the time I was there. The events recounted in an ethnographic study, and the way in which they are put

together, to tell a story 'alter, in the end, whatever state or situation was said to obtain at the beginning of the tale' (Van Maanen 1988 pp. 101-2). This thesis is a construction in which I position myself and members of Xorg staff, based on my reading of the data generated in my research.

I am not using the concept of triangulation in this study; rather, I am using appropriate strategies to analyse specific modes of social action that each have their own form – in the case of this study, discourse and narrative (Atkinson, Delamont et al. 2008), captured in different ways, including in fieldnotes, interview transcripts and organisational documents. I am reflexive not only in terms of how who I am affects the research but more importantly, for this study and my theoretical approach, I am reflexive by including in the analysis my own performance and my relationships with others in the data generated. I use my awareness of social positioning in the analysis of the data and include some of my ruminations about the meanings of particular actions, for the reader to consider. I shall explain my application of theory to the data and shall lay out in detail examples of data and my analytic thinking for the reader's consideration (Potter and Wetherell 1987 p. 172). I do not aim to discover facts or to construct an overall theory. Rather, I offer a highly contingent snapshot of identity work in Xorg. As Loon explains, ethnography is often described as 'a journey', 'translation' and 'border crossings'. Loon continues, 'All of these metaphors indicate the transience of ethnographic writing as itself an intersubjective and spatially and temporally contingent enterprise' (Loon 2001 p. 279).

During my fieldwork, the main decision I made concerning the type of ethnography appropriate to my research questions involved bringing in understandings of performance and paying particular attention to relationships including my relationship with my co-performers (Madison 2005). The research is concerned with identities, and, as was discussed in Chapter Two, identities are created and changed in relationships and are performed with and for others.

As Riessman summarises:

[...] identities are situated and accomplished with audience in mind. To put it simply, one can't be a 'self' by oneself; rather, identities are constructed in 'shows' that persuade. Performances are expressive, they are performances *for* others. Hence the response of the listener (and ultimately the reader) is implicated in the art of storytelling. Including the audience as an active presence requires a shift in methods.

(Riessman 2008 p. 106)

This shift in methods relates to the concerns of my research questions with the different ways in which organisational activities were constituted and how organisational and individual identities were built in different interactional contexts. In my analysis, I consider the following: what an action accomplishes in its specific context and for what purposes it is performed; what the significance is of particular actions at certain times; and to whom an action may be directed or to whom it may be a response, which includes an analysis of my own role in any given performance. In constructing my account, I give prominence to the dialogue in the research relationship (Riessman 2008 p. 137) between researcher and researched. This is in line with my theoretical position, in which I generate insight from performances with and for others, including myself.

I approach context in terms of its co-construction by me and others as we draw upon available discursive resources. The process of contextualisation is connected to the form of data capture. I am present in different ways in the different constructions of data. At one end of the spectrum I created an account of particular moments in my fieldnotes and I contextualised the actions I was writing about myself. My analysis of my fieldnotes includes consideration of what assumptions about context I may have been making and how I created particular meanings through contextualisation. At the other end of the spectrum, I analyse data that I was not involved in generating, although I selected extracts for analysis – by choosing interesting examples of recurring patterns. In these data, from, for example, organisational documents or television programmes, I pay attention to how various possible aspects of context are invoked or not invoked at particular moments. Due to the implications of different types of data generation for the claims which can be made by the research (Tusting and Maybin 2007), I am careful to indicate the type of data I am drawing on in each part of the empirical chapters and to flag when I move from one to another.

A focus on what is carried out in interactions and relationships with particular audiences also provides an approach to the problem in ethnographic research around identifying emic (meaningful to the researched) and etic (meaningful to the researcher) understandings of what is meaningful in a situation or setting (Hammersley 2006). It is considered necessary not only to interpret what is

going on, but also to understand how what is going on is construed by members of the social setting. As Hammersley has put it:

[...] crucial to ethnography [...] is a tension between what we might call participant and analytic perspectives. As ethnographers, we typically insist on the importance of coming to understand the perspectives of the people being studied if we are to explain, or even to describe accurately, the activities they engage in and the courses of action they adopt. At the same time, there is usually an equal emphasis on developing an analytic understanding of perspectives, activities and actions, one that is likely to be different from, perhaps even in conflict with, how the people themselves see the world.

(Hammersley 2006 p. 4)

Identifying emic and etic understandings is challenging and the notion of a distinction is problematic because of the implication that cultures are identifiable as individually distinct, separate and detached or that there is a distance between the individuals – researchers and researched. This implication originates in the division between subject and object, however the processes of objectivation and subjectivation are connected, as this critique of the term most often used to describe what the ethnographer does, ‘participant observation’, explains:

The notion of participation is oddly neutral and covers a multitude of possible positions *vis-à-vis* the object of research, while observation carries with it an idea of distance and separation which harks back to natural science models of investigation. Drawing attention to the experiences that connect objectivation with subjectivation takes us a small step further in that it reminds us, first, that the researcher is not simply observing, but observing from precise coordinates within space, time and individual biography and, second, that these play a part in the way that our various interlocutors make sense of us in their worlds.

(Simpson 2006 p. 127)

In relation to my study, the quotation above highlights two issues: firstly, that the way in which I came to be in Xorg, and my position there, played a part in how members of Xorg staff made sense of my presence in the organisation, and secondly, that the term ‘participant observation’ is inadequate and the connotations of neutrality and distance misleading. In my study, the emic–etic

problem is addressed in two ways. Firstly, the choice of action as the unit of analysis means that one of my research interests is in how boundaries between groups of people, and in particular the characteristics of those groups, are constructed in interaction (Scollon and Scollon 2007b). Secondly, rather than foregrounding insight into insider understandings or the benefits of outsider knowledge, I prioritise what happens in relationships and interactions, including my relationship with Xorg members of staff, thus 'exploring, from a deliberately emphasised position, the relationship between informant and ethnographer' (Wardle 2007 p. 149).

The generation of my ethnographic fieldnotes will be discussed in the section on data capture below. In this current section, I shall describe the analysis of the ethnographic data. My fieldnotes are my unique interpretation and representation of the social action in the field. My fieldnotes 'present *a version* of a world that functions more as a filter than a mirror reflecting the "reality" of events' (Emerson, Fretz et al. 2001 p. 358). I coded my fieldnotes in terms of types of actions and what I thought was being achieved by particular actions. I do not regard my fieldnotes to be fixed data and I do not use the original fieldnote excerpts as evidence in contrast to interpretation; instead, I have reinterpreted them over the course of time (Van Maanen 1988 p. 118) in connection with my developing understanding of the social setting and the constitution of Xorg. I select interesting examples of recurring patterns in my analysis and in the data chapters I draw on my fieldnotes for illustrations of my analytic understanding and interpretation. I mostly use an integrative rather

than an excerpt strategy to incorporate my fieldnotes into the text of the thesis (Emerson, Fretz et al. 1995 pp. 179-80). Occasionally in the thesis I directly excerpt original fieldnotes, usually when I wish to say something about my own stance at a moment in time or when I want to highlight the difference between how I made sense of an action at the time of writing the original fieldnote and how I make sense of that action now.

The way I feature in the data captured by fieldnotes is of course different to, for example, my performance in a research interview. While I can analyse my own language and discursive moves in an interview transcript by treating the E in the transcript as distinct from the Emily 'I' who is writing the thesis, I created the social setting in which I was present in a different way through my fieldnotes. My fieldnotes represent my attempts to understand what was going on, and in particular to note the effects, impressions, and uncertainties that I experienced. My fieldnotes do not represent the one true capture of what was going on, but rather my struggle and partial understanding.

In summary, my methods centre on an analysis of the function of actions carried out in relationships, including those with me, and are sensitive to processes of contextualisation in which the context is created by the speakers or authors. I acknowledge the entanglement of what is meaningful to the researcher with what is meaningful to the researched in the performances of identities, which are the focus of this study. I have regard for the form and function of different types of social action. However, as was explained in

Chapter Two, I focus on the use of language and the discursive construction of identities, using an ethnographic approach that focuses on the discursive practices associated with the social setting and how they are used. Both my ethnographic and discourse analytic methods, and also my approach to narrative analysis, have a consistent focus on how social reality is constructed.

Discourse analysis

I conducted a form of discourse analysis, outlined below, on texts in my data, including interview transcripts, organisational documents, a transcript of a television programme in which the director of Xorg was interviewed, and a transcript of a promotional DVD.

Discourse analysis is not only a method but also an epistemology. Talk is constitutive (Wetherell, Taylor et al. 2001), and in this epistemology, hearing what others are saying occurs through broader cultural discourses and shared resources. In accordance with the principles of discourse analysis around language as action, I see speakers and authors as performing speech acts through which they attain particular achievements and accomplishments. As Atkinson, Delamont et al. state:

Accounts are among the resources that actors and informants use in order to perform self-presentations. They produce accounts of their own and others' actions in order to generate moral evaluations, to present themselves as reasonable moral agents, and to give social action the appearance of reasonable motivation.

(Atkinson, Delamont et al. 2008 p. 63)

I do not take language to be a direct reflection of the reality of the work of Xorg and reproduce it as evidence for my findings. Instead, I focus on the moral work done and analyse the way in which 'speech is performed as an accounting

device or method' (Atkinson, Delamont et al. 2008 p. 65), and in this way reflect upon the concerns of the participants and what is important to them.

The particular form of discourse analysis I draw upon is Wetherell's synthetic approach (Wetherell 1998) from critical discursive social psychology. This draws on both ethnomethodology and the insights of conversation analysis on the one hand, and Foucauldian theory on the other.

Conversation analysis (Pomerantz and Fehr 1997; Heritage 2001; Wooffitt 2001) is concerned with how speakers make sense of what is going on, in the detail of the action, especially sequence and turn-taking, in the immediate interaction under analysis. It emphasises what is important to the participants, rather than the concerns of the analyst. Techniques of conversation analysis include membership categorisation analysis (Sacks 1995), which I shall draw upon and explain separately in Chapter Six. Conversation analysis emphasises agency to a greater extent than Foucauldian theory in focusing on conversation practices.

Discourse analysis using Foucauldian theory (Carabine 2001; Hall 2001) tends to focus on the dominant broad cultural discourses that are seen to have a coercive power, which determines how the discourses are used and which limits agency. This approach can emphasise the understandings of the researchers more than the understandings of the researched as researchers identify the broad cultural discourses.

The synthetic approach (Wetherell 1998) brings together how language is used in context and the discursive resources drawn upon. In particular, it pays attention to the structure of the argument and looks at the discursive resources speakers or authors use, and how they use them, in accounting for their actions. Importantly, this approach acknowledges variability in accounts. The synthetic approach also facilitates consideration of both how individuals shape their identities in the particular circumstances of any interaction, and the constraints they are working within as they draw on discursive resources with wider meanings outside the immediate interaction. I also look outwards to contextualise the detail of social interaction within broader cultural power relations (Widdicombe 1998; Wetherell and Edley 1999). In terms of performance of identities, speakers are positioned by others and position themselves.

The analytic concepts I use are interpretative repertoires and subject positions. Interpretative repertoires (Potter and Wetherell 1987) are common-sense, familiar ways of talking and describing and making sense of things.

Interpretative repertoires are 'relatively coherent ways of talking about objects and events in the world', 'a range of linguistic resources that can be drawn upon and utilized in the course of everyday social interaction' (Edley 2001 p. 198). They are sets of words and expressions that may centre on a particular idea or meaning and the various associations with and connections to it. By using them, speakers can make sense of a situation and account for their own

actions. They are flexible, and people draw on a number of sometimes conflicting, different repertoires.

By identifying the repertoires in use and analysing how they are used I show the identity work performed as the meanings of the repertoires are accepted or rejected, and suggest how these discursive resources have implications for the construction and performance of identities. This approach highlights the contradictions and inconsistencies between the available discursive resources. The participants and the researcher can use only what is culturally available to them, and there will be contradictions and complexities, rather than a stable perspective, in what they say. It is also possible to identify when speakers or authors are doing rhetorical work by talking against established ideas (Billig 1987). This is the idea that the speaker is talking not only to the immediate audience, but also to other imagined or unseen audiences, especially critical ones. It is also possible to identify when speakers use an alternative resource to that which may have been expected or suggested.

I also use the analytic tool of subject positions (Davies and Harré 1990). The concept of subject positions is what 'connects the wider notions of discourses and interpretative repertoires to the social construction of particular selves. Subject positions can be defined quite simply as "locations" within a conversation. They are the identities made relevant by specific ways of talking' (Edley 2001 p. 210). In other words, subject positions are identities or kinds of person, which are available in particular moments and have implications for

what an individual can or cannot do or say. A position is 'a loose set of rights and duties that limit the possibilities of action' (Harré and Moghaddam 2003 p.

5). I understand the creation of subject positions to be an ongoing process.

Positioning is 'the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines' (Davies and Harré 1990 p. 48). Positioning emphasises a social-constructionist approach (Harré 2002). As Wilkinson and Kitzinger explain:

Positioning is not simply the result of internal or cultural causes, [...people] are engaged in ongoing interaction, in the process of building or sustaining relationships with others through the medium of conversation. In speaking as they do, they are not simply reflecting a preexisting world [...]; rather, they are also actively constructing it.

(Wilkinson and Kitzinger 2003 p. 158)

Positioning theory has been applied to larger units beyond the interpersonal encounter (e.g. Harré, Moghaddam et al. 2009), including institutions and nations. I look at the positioning of organisations as well as the positioning between interviewer and interviewee. In looking at the positioning of organisations, I also analyse processes of indirect positioning, which Harré and Moghaddam explain as follows:

The use of attributions of mental (stupid), characterological (unreliable), or moral (puritanical) traits to position someone, favourably or unfavourably, with respect to oneself and one's interests, or the interests of one's own group, we could call indirect or presumptive positioning. [...] This technique of establishing and occupying the moral high ground is evident in larger scale discourses, in which it is nations or cultures that are the beings being positioned.

(Harré and Moghaddam 2003 p. 6)

Finally, I wish to make clear an important point in my approach to analysis of the use of language. While I examine the discursive resources that are used, the ways in which they are used, and the subject positions implicated in talk or a

written text, I am not assuming knowledge of, or attempting to deduce, the speaker's or author's intention. I am analysing the function of language.

In summary, my approach to discourse in this study involves analysing interpretative repertoires and subject positions. I identify interpretative repertoires, analyse how they are used, and examine the implications for subject positions. I search for patterns in the data, look for variability in accounts – including differences within and between accounts – and ask why an account is different at the point it is, how what is said solves a problem and what is being attended to by the way the speech or written language is performed. I also look for what is not said.

Narrative

As a complement to my focus on the discursive construction of identities, and as part of providing an ethnographic account that attempts to acknowledge the complexity of the social action in the social setting by addressing the form and function of different modes of social action (Atkinson, Delamont et al. 2008), I also analyse narrative, which is a common form of social action visible in my data. Stories play an important part in the generation of knowledge, and can be analysed through various frameworks (Goodley, Lawthorn et al. 2004). I apply narrative analysis, of the type outlined below, to texts such as interview transcripts and organisational documents, but also to the narratives captured in my fieldnotes.

I use the word 'story' to refer to a plot, while I use the word 'narrative' to refer to the way the story is told, especially in regard to more analytic considerations such as structure or performance. Constructing a narrative is a way that people interpret their experiences (Ochs 2004). Narratives make a point and are memorable. Narratives are useful for promotional activities (as will be discussed in Chapter Four) and for the construction of the moral order (which will be evident in Chapter Five). As Atkinson et al. put it: 'The narrative order is an aspect of the social order more generally. It is, moreover, an aspect of the *moral order* through which motives and consequences of action are expressed and shared' (Atkinson, Delamont et al. 2008 p. 91). Narratives are often enjoyed by the narrator and the audience, and can offer a degree of freedom to the narrator:

In telling a story, the requirement of accuracy is relaxed in the interest of making a symbolic point. Poetic licence is the prerogative of storytelling. At the same time, by shrouding a point in symbolic terms, stories are able to evade censors, both internal and external, and express views and feelings which may be unacceptable in straight talk.
(Gabriel and Griffiths 2004 p. 114)

I mix different forms of narrative analysis, including thinking about existing knowledge and what narratives make the story possible; narratological issues around how the story and aspects of it, e.g. the resolution, are formed and what is missing from the story; and relational issues, especially the response called for from the listener/reader. In identifying a narrative, I look for key structural elements such as orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution and coda (Labov and Waletzky 1967). However, in line with my theoretical approach, which draws on the function of language, in my analysis I follow the principles of contemporary narrative research. These understand narrative in the

following ways: as a form of discourse that shapes or orders past experience; as verbal action that 'shapes, constructs, and performs the self; experience, and reality'; as 'enabled and constrained by a range of social resources and circumstances'; and as 'socially situated interactive performances – as produced in this particular setting, for this particular audience, for these particular purposes' (Chase 2005 pp. 656-7). I focus on the function of the narrative in relation to the audience including the researcher. This views the researcher or audience as an active presence in the text (Riessman 2008).

Narrative is a form of social action through which identities are constructed and performed. It is a way for narrators to make sense of who they are or what they are doing and so is informative about how people understand themselves and the context in which they are acting. Narratives vary and stories about the same event are different, as the narrative has a different function for different audiences in different interactions (Cortazzi 2001 p. 388). My analysis looks at the narratives that are culturally available to the speaker or author. I look at what kinds of stories are told, how people place themselves in the stories, how events are connected, how aspects of context are invoked and how all of this is informative of how Xorg and its work are understood.

Data capture

I captured data through fieldnotes, interview transcripts, organisational documents and other media such as a television programme and a promotional

DVD. I attempted to be as comprehensive as possible in my data generation, capturing various kinds of data.

I wrote fieldnotes for each day of the fieldwork period, which was split into two halves. My fieldnotes cover the precise dates of 22nd February to 10th April and 4th May to 28th June. The use of fieldnotes enabled me to capture forms of action other than the use of language in interviews and written documents. My notes cover activity in the office (most of the time), on three trips to institutions (five days in total for the three trips), activity around training on foster care (three days) and activity around training on attachment (three days).

I made jottings during my days with Xorg and wrote fuller fieldnotes as soon as possible, often in the evening of the same day or during the following weekend, so that I would be able to look back at how my responses changed over time. Rather than contrast a personal journal or diary of my own responses with findings about what others did, I took the view that it was not possible to extract myself from the data and that what I was learning and observing about the actions of others was entangled with my own reflections. Hence all of my writing is in one document. I marked very strong personal emotional reactions with square brackets.

The interviews were interactions in which the interviewer and interviewee generated talk in which different ideas were used and developed and in which some things were unsaid. My study understands interviews to generate

language which can be analysed for performative acts (Denzin 2001; Ten Have 2004). The interviews are active (Holstein and Gubrium 2004); in other words they are interactions in which meaning is constructed. I am not assuming what went on in an interview to be indicative of actions or understandings elsewhere in other situations, but I take an interview to be one performance, which did of course involve E (me) steering the choice of topics for discussion, despite the open-ended nature of the interviews.

I formally interviewed all of the staff based in the main office, where I was located, apart from the finance team and the receptionist, whom I had planned to include but, as securing interviews proved difficult, as will be discussed later in this chapter, I prioritised those working in other functions closer to the training work. Each interview was different and I steered the conversation based on their individual roles and puzzles I had encountered around the organisation's work. As I am interested in the talk around the work, and not the individuals, I use letters rather than names to signify the speakers in the transcripts. Appendix One provides a list of letters and organisational roles. I refer to myself as E in the interview transcripts and in the analysis I distance myself from E and analyse E's performative role and achievements in those instances without assuming that I have knowledge of E's intentions in particular speech acts. I audio-recorded the interviews, with permission from the interviewees, and transcribed them myself. I acknowledge that my transcription is a construction (Ochs 1979). As I am primarily interested in the

words and phrases used in the talk, I applied a simple system of transcription symbols, which is detailed in Appendix Two.

I also collected organisational documents and my analysis draws upon a selection of annual reports (those that were available) and publicity leaflets. These constructions of data are different again, in that I select the extracts I focus on, but the interactions in these data did not arise through a relationship with me but in response to other audiences in the broader context.

Other data encompassed by the ethnography included a CCTV9 (China Central Television's English-language channel) programme in which the director of Xorg is interviewed and a promotional DVD. Here I selected the extracts for analysis and I transcribed them in the same way as for the interviews. The data also included a promotional audio CD, although I do not use extracts from it in this thesis.

The cross-cultural context

This section discusses the implications of generating data with others with whom I do not share the same cultural background. The insider-outsider conundrum is part of the practice of ethnography and the tension it presents has been widely debated (e.g. Dowling 1999). Etic and emic understandings of what is meaningful and the complexity of the relationship between the researcher and the researched were discussed earlier in this chapter. Here I shall reflect particularly on the implications of the degree of shared

understanding for my approach, which foregrounds discourse analysis and the discursive construction of Xorg and what it is doing.

The term 'cross-cultural' is helpful in suggesting the complexity of cultural interactions in Xorg. Different institutional cultures impacted on Xorg's work and, in terms of their individual personal backgrounds, the staff came from many different subcultures, countries and communities of origin, and had different career histories. Nevertheless, my study avoids imposing definitions of separate cultures. Individuals operate in subcultures and there are many divisions and intersections within and between cultures and subcultures. I analyse the construction of the cultural context in the data, including how and with what effect references to nationalities, ethnicities or other categories are used and what those categories imply by the way they are used in a particular context. Membership categorisation analysis will be discussed when it is used in Chapter Six.

My approach involves identifying and analysing ways of speaking, and also narrative conventions. I have a longstanding interest in China. I studied Chinese history, language and poetry, and other aspects of Chinese culture and society, at undergraduate level. I also have an interest in child welfare. I have worked for children's charities in the UK. As indicated above, however, each individual is a member of different cultures and subcultures. I was not entirely familiar with the cultural context of those with whom I was generating data, whether they were from China or the UK, and their ways of speaking were not

my own. I offer one account, using the resources and tools available to me, and, while I have applied methodological rigour in my approach, my thesis is one construction of events.

I acknowledge that there is a social hierarchy that affects access to linguistic resources and in which people are placed differently according to certain factors. These factors include English-/non-English-speaking, and native English-/non-native English-speaking (Miller 2004) . Languages are valued differently and provide different options for identity work, limiting identity work in different ways (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004). The discursive resources drawn upon in a research project conducted in Mandarin by a different individual, and analysis of their use by a different researcher – sharing some and not sharing other, different aspects of the cultural context – would, of course, have produced a different account of the social setting.

All of the data I draw upon in this thesis were generated in English. English was an official working language of Xorg. Only one member of the Xorg staff, and the people from the China Social Work Association based in the office for part of the time, did not speak English to a level sufficient to work in that language, and I used an interpreter on some occasions, as will be discussed below. Several members of staff who were not native speakers of English had studied at postgraduate level in the UK and/or previously worked in interpreting roles. Most importantly, however, my theoretical approach is not concerned with language use as being correct or incorrect, or with whether a

non-native speaker is deficient in some way, but rather understands language as socially constituted, and so asks how language is used discursively (Miller 2004). My methodology depends only on what people or documents say and what people do when they are speaking, and does not aim to comment on what is in an individual's mind and whether this is communicated correctly.

The linguistic environment in Xorg was a bilingual one, as some staff spoke to each other in Mandarin as well as English, and relationships with parties outside Xorg were often conducted in Mandarin. After my arrival at Xorg, I began to realise very strongly the differences in understandings, about language issues, the possible need for an interpreter, and issues around working with an interpreter, between people on the ground in Xorg and me, coming from a social-science background and being intent on carrying out a research project in social science. I was confronted with the difference between my own thoughts about language issues and the organisation's approach to languages and interpreting. I became aware of the considerable difference that can be evident in the ways in which people identify what is or is not a language barrier and the impact of any such barrier, the ways people address challenges in communication (specifically languages in the sense of English/Mandarin rather than culture), and the ways in which they explain away or acknowledge language barriers. The degree of my own competence in Mandarin was of concern to me. As I began my fieldwork, I was concerned about interpretation and translation issues. I was able to speak intermediate Mandarin, but I knew that I would need an interpreter for research work. In contrast, the language,

issue did not appear to be an issue in Xorg. One member of staff and the three people from the China Social Work Association did not speak English, or spoke basic English only. Four members of staff did not speak Mandarin, or spoke basic Mandarin only. The inability to speak Mandarin was depicted as an issue of not much importance at all. Certainly I was told that it was not a problem. That some people couldn't communicate directly, or understand the subtleties and nuances of what others were saying, was not a concern. My fieldnotes indicate concern at some moments, particularly on one visit to an institution, at the quality and impact of the interpretation between some Xorg staff who did not speak Mandarin and institutional staff who did not speak English, but in that case too, my concern was not shared.

While I did use interpreters to generate a small amount of data within Xorg and some outside Xorg, ultimately that was peripheral to the focus of my study and most of that data has not been relevant for the final thesis. This is largely due to the change in my research focus and the shift of attention from training courses and trainees to Xorg itself.

Prior to the start of my fieldwork, Xorg had not agreed to the bringing in of an independent interpreter from outside the organisation, but were prepared to interpret themselves, and I understood that there were staff fluent in English. I understood that most of the Xorg staff could speak English, and therefore that conversations or interviews with them could be conducted with no interpreter, and so I thought that the most immediate challenge would come from

dependence on a couple of people only to interpret and explain what was happening during training courses. In the event, as I have explained, my focus changed. I spoke to C through several different other staff on various occasions, using a pool of interpreters from the organisation. Using more than one or two people to interpret meant that they provided checks on each other and revealed differences in understanding and ways of translating.

In the end, I used outside interpreters for the two training courses I observed and for some data generated outside Xorg, although this data will not be used in this thesis, as, ultimately, it was peripheral to my focus on Xorg rather than training content. I talked with the interpreters about the research on an ongoing basis and engaged them in discussion and debriefings about difficulties in translation. This was part of my intention to make the interpreter visible and include them in discussions about reflexivity and content.

Ethical research practice

This section will discuss my ethical practice in data generation. The main elements to my approach were negotiating consent in discussion; practising ongoing consent; and acknowledging, addressing and respecting the resistance of those individuals who indicated they were not comfortable with aspects of participating in the research.

All members of staff were aware of my presence and of my identity as a researcher. I identified myself as a researcher at the earliest opportunity,

usually when being introduced to a member of staff. This was sometimes a challenge, as a couple of key staff, with their understanding of the 'internship' discussed in Chapter One, often introduced me as an 'intern' or as being on a 'placement' in which I would be learning practical things about the work from them. I followed up the introduction with an informal chat in which I would explain that I was also there to generate data for my research. I paid attention to talking to Xorg staff about the independent nature of the research. I tried to communicate the notion that the research was separate from any organisational activities, and thus that people should not feel under pressure to participate. I asked the gatekeepers (see the next paragraph) to support me in emphasising that people were not obliged to participate. I gradually gave out information about the research in conversation. I mostly used informal conversations and discussions with staff in the working environment. This meant that information was given out to people individually. Ongoing dialogue with members of staff at Xorg, and viewing the consent process as a continuous ongoing process, were the most important parts of the process, as well as always introducing myself as a researcher as well as an intern. I used my discretion and my judgement to avoid putting pressure on individuals, and I tried to ensure that individuals were free not to participate, including when they did not decline directly but indicated discomfort in other ways; I viewed it as being insufficient just to tell people that they had complete freedom not to participate or to withdraw at any point.

I set off for China with a number of information sheets for different participants, such as Xorg staff and trainees, and corresponding 'agreement to participate' forms. Moreover, I had planned that the documentation would be revised and translated with the help of what I called at that time 'the key gatekeepers' (senior staff at Xorg) who I thought could advise on what was appropriate in the cultural context. Early on in my fieldwork period, I asked 'the key gatekeepers' for advice. The advice recommended a lot of chatting and making of friends, and discouraged the use of documentation, which I was told would be off-putting and discordant with the need to do things as friends. In the end, most of my data was generated with members of Xorg staff, and not trainees. However, 'chatting' was still an approach that was encouraged, and paperwork was not. This approach does, of course, fit with the practice of 'ongoing consent' and I negotiated informed consent in discussion.

I had a sense that participants feared that signed consent forms might make the information they provided traceable to them. Some members of staff had indicated that paperwork was alien to the cultural context. This is in line with what I was told in a personal email by a UK academic conducting social research in China who said that she does not ask people she interviews in China to sign a consent form because it would seem quite strange to them. The fear of being traced is an issue identified in other research in which individuals want to protect their identities (Wiles, Heath et al. 2005). I found presenting the form to be signed as something for individuals' protection to be incongruous in the context. The idea of being taken through an agreement-to-participate form in a

contractual manner, was alien to potential participants, as well as off-putting. In addition to the concerns already mentioned, it also introduced the idea that they had to say something 'right'. I felt I had encountered the difference between, on the one hand, a consent process to achieve informed consent and, on the other, the final object of the signed form. I sensed some resistance to doing an interview with me, and a lack of trust in the process. While everyone said it would be fine to do one, getting dates into the diary proved very difficult. The interviews eventually took place in the last month of my time with the organisation. I was on the point of curtailing the interview process; however, the interviews did eventually take place successfully. I felt that most of the individuals related well to me personally, and that ultimately the interviews were given as a favour. On the basis of all the reasons discussed, I decided that to ask them to sign a form would not be appropriate.

Another key part of my ethical practice was to address the way my research questions changed during the fieldwork. Listening to the discussion about the training plan, I had no idea whether more training courses would be run, but I assumed that something would change. For quite some time I kept hoping that my original plan would get off the ground. The people there had been told I was trying to find out about foster care and observe the training, but I changed my focus and began doing something different from what I had told the members of staff that I would be doing. Further, I was not just changing my focus to another topic, but shifted my focus to a closer study of Xorg itself. In terms of how I was negotiating my presence as a researcher, my main task now

was to communicate the change in my research focus, and to explain, and gain consent for, what I was now doing, i.e. observing the workings of the organisation irrespective of the training carried out. Again, I pursued obtaining informed consent by talking with individuals.

Conclusion

This chapter has explained my methodological approach. This is an ethnographic study which takes action, especially talk, as the unit of analysis. Data were captured in various ways including in fieldnotes, interview transcripts, organisational documents and other media such as a television programme and a promotional DVD. Within my ethnographic study, I draw upon a synthetic approach to discourse analysis, using the analytical tools of interpretative repertoires and subject positions, and I also use narrative analysis. Importantly, I do not assume that I can know the speaker's or author's intention when analysing the function of what is said, but rather I am analysing the discursive context of being an actor in Xorg.

I understand my account to be a construction, as are the data, including my transcriptions of spoken data. I am approaching reflexive research practice in a distinctive way, by analysing my own performance in the data.

The chapter also discussed the cross-cultural context and ethical research practice. While the term 'cross-cultural' can be helpful, I do not assume to know what it may mean to belong to any particular culture or subculture and I

analyse how such groups are constructed in the data. The main elements of my ethical research practice were negotiating informed consent in discussion and implementing an ongoing consent process.

Chapter Four: The Social Construction of Success

This first data chapter will explore the performance of identities, focusing on success. Chapter One introduced Xorg and my impression of it, prior to the time of my fieldwork, as a successful organisation effectively implementing a suitable programme of work. This current chapter originated in my response to the puzzles I encountered around the activities of the organisation during my fieldwork. These puzzles derived from the difficulty I had in working out what the core task of the organisation was, and the perplexing relationship between the more public representations of the work and what I saw being done, including more locally produced, practice-oriented representations of what was being done and why. My data show that much work was done to build up the success of the organisation. This chapter will consider the more public representations of the organisation and discuss how success was constructed through identity work.

Work in the anthropology of development suggests that policy legitimates rather than orientates practice. For example, Mosse finds that success depends upon establishing and sustaining a compelling interpretation of events, and linking supporters to the success of the project – often using ambiguous concepts that allow opposing views to be brought together (Mosse 2005). In this chapter I shall pursue this interest in how the problem the organisation seeks to address and the way it is addressing that problem are created and depicted, how practice is represented, and how others are positioned in relation to the

organisation and its work. However, I shall start from the micro level, looking at the detail of how success is constructed and performed with different audiences and in different data, and at how there is not just one way in which success is performed. I am not focusing on different views articulated by different parties, but on the range of interpretative repertoires with which an individual actor or author of a text works and how the repertoires are used.

As was discussed in Chapter Two, I am using the idea of identity work to understand the construction of both organisational and personal identities, which I consider to be interwoven. This chapter will focus specifically on successful identities. One study, of how transnational NGOs in China manage their multiple memberships in 'national polities, national cultures, religious communities and a world culture', acknowledges the insecure position of NGOs in China, which I discussed in Chapter One, and is concerned with the achievement of success 'at the most basic level – survival' (Chan 2008 p. 239). I shall not attempt to define success further here, but shall lay out, over the course of the chapter, how successful identities were worked up in my data, and what ideas were important in performances of success.

Using the tools and methods of analysis outlined below, I shall draw on a variety of data in this particular chapter. I shall consider what is achieved by representations of the organisation's work in items such as annual reports, newsletters to supporters, advertisements, and a promotional DVD; what is achieved by performances of particular organisational activities, including a

meeting with a representative of a funder, an opening ceremony for the new building, and other actions captured in my fieldnotes; and what is achieved in performances of research interviews between E and members of staff.

In this chapter, the analytic concepts I shall use when looking at the language in texts are interpretative repertoires and subject positions. As was discussed in Chapter Three, I understand interpretative repertoires to be ways of talking about and constructing things, each with its own vocabulary. As Edley says, 'Interpretative repertoires [...] can be usefully thought of as books on the shelves of a public library, permanently available for borrowing. [...] when people talk (or think) about things, they invariably do so in terms already provided for them by history' (Edley 2001 p. 198). I shall explore how specific interpretative repertoires are drawn upon to produce particular accounts of Xorg's work.

The interpretative repertoires I have identified as being important in the data relating to this chapter, and which I include on the basis of their use in significant patterns of consistency and variation (Potter and Wetherell 1987), are as follows. I shall use my own words to summarise and name the interpretative repertoires, based on my identification of when people are making the same kinds of arguments, even though they are not all using the same words as each other. However, I shall give in brackets examples of the words, phrases, expressions and images, actually used in the texts, which characterise the repertoires. The repertoires will be explored over the course of the chapter, but I

provide the following list here for reference. (I shall use italics, as in the list below, to indicate the name of a repertoire throughout the remaining chapters.)

In relation to the children and their care, the interpretative repertoires are *every child needs a family* ('children in families', 'families of their own', 'ordinary family life'); *love is transformative* ('when a child feels loved, [then...]'); and *foster care in China is taking off* ('[e.g. thousands of] children placed', 'vision for a million').

In relation to development projects, the interpretative repertoires are *development is about giving people skills* ('training of', 'equip'); *good development projects can be scaled up or replicated and continue after the developers have left* ('cascade model', 'spread', 'can be replicated', 'after we have left', 'continue', 'legacy'); *good development projects are conducted with local partners* ('partnership', 'help/assist [e.g. the government]', 'it's their project'); and *the demands of funders are constraining and not necessarily in organisations' interests* ('selling [to a funder]', taking a 'firm line' with a funder).

I shall also use the analytic concept of subject positions, which, as was explained in Chapter Three, 'can be defined quite simply as "locations" within a conversation. They are the identities made relevant by specific ways of talking' (Edley 2001 p. 210). The idea of positioning emphasises my social-constructionist approach as it is concerned with how people build relationships with others and construct and reconstruct the social setting. Positioning theory

has been applied to larger units beyond the interpersonal encounter (e.g. Harré, Moghaddam et al. 2009), including institutions and nations. In this chapter I shall look at the positioning of organisations as well as the positioning of individuals including interviewer and interviewee.

As well as using the concepts described above to analyse texts, in this chapter I shall also draw on my analysis of my ethnographic fieldnotes. As was discussed in Chapter Three, my fieldnotes are my unique representation of what went on in the field and the description in my notes is generated from my particular interpretations. I coded my fieldnotes in terms of types of actions and what I thought was being achieved by particular actions. I shall draw on my fieldnotes for illustrations of my analytic understanding and interpretation, and integrate them with the text and the analysis of other data.

As was also discussed in Chapter Three, I shall pay attention to the function of stories in my analysis of both the language in texts and my ethnographic fieldnotes. I am interested in the stories that people tell about Xorg and how they communicate something important to the narrator through the symbolism that storytelling offers. This chapter will consider some success stories. As Gabriel and Griffiths say, 'Stories entertain and good storytellers and raconteurs command power and esteem. But good stories also educate, inspire, indoctrinate and convince' (2004 p. 114). I shall look at how some success stories are persuasive in the way they tell us about Xorg's position and influence.

Different ways of talking create different identities. Sullivan and McCarthy, for

example, have shown that different 'discursive forms (epic, ironic, confessional, argumentative) [...] offer changing and shifting organizational identities to various organizational stakeholders' (2008 p. 528). Epic discourse is relevant to this chapter and success stories, and I shall discuss an example of an epic story.

The first part of this chapter will discuss the active location of Xorg in child welfare in China and the second part will discuss the contextualisation of Xorg's position.

Locating Xorg in child welfare in China

Xorg's most recent annual report, at the time of my fieldwork, included a section that read as follows:

- 1 Impact in China
- 2 200,000 Children in Families
- 3
- 4 [Xorg] is shaped by the conviction that the long-term benefit of planning [sic]
- 5 children into loving foster families of their own is of primary concern. This is
- 6 achieved through the training of social workers and orphanage staff, based on
- 7 robust professional standards, in a programme that can be replicated across the
- 8 country. Today, [Xorg] is active in over 180 orphanages in 30 provinces, and has
- 9 placed thousands of children, who have spent their lives in China's state and
- 10 private orphanages, into foster families.
- 11
- 12 It is agreed that foster care will receive a higher profile within the social sector,
- 13 as well as in academic fields in China [sic no comma] and that more staff from
- 14 CSWA [China Social Work Association] and the Ministry will be allocated to
- 15 the development of foster care projects across the country.
- 16
- 17 So this is how the map looks now: [The text is followed by a map of China
- 18 entitled '[Xorg]'s sphere of influence' and covered in two different types of dots
- 19 representing the project sites and orphanages trained, in line with the numbers
- 20 mentioned above].

(Extract 4a, from most recent annual report at time of fieldwork)

This extract begins by drawing on one of the interpretative repertoires relating to child welfare, which I identified as recurring in the data, and which I have

called *every child needs a family*. The text refers to 'children in families' (line 2) and placing children into families (lines 4–5 and 9–10). This interpretative repertoire is a way of talking that resonates with a widely held belief promoted by international organisations such as the Better Care Network, which was formed by a group of organisations including UNICEF and Save the Children UK, is guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and is concerned with the detrimental affects of institutional care (Better Care Network 2010). In this particular instance, the interpretative repertoire around *every child needs a family* is drawn upon to present a moral belief – a 'conviction' (line 4). No evidence is needed to explain it.

One of the phrases used to describe the families is 'loving foster families of their own' (line 5). This is an interesting phrase in which the child having a family 'of their own' is the important idea and what else a 'foster' family might be is passed over. It is possible that the term 'foster families' is being used in a general way to indicate family care, however it does have connotations of being temporary, especially to readers familiar with foster care in the UK – and with Xorg having a board of trustees and supporters in the UK, some of the readers would be likely to be familiar with practices in the UK. In a previous annual report, it is explained that Xorg looks for 'permanent families through long term foster care'. This raises a plethora of complicated issues, from the circumstances around domestic adoption in China, including the one-child policy, which before recent legislative changes may have made long-term foster care seem more possible (Dowling and Brown 2009), to the difficulties that

other actors suggest inhibit the development of stable, long-term foster-care programmes and accompanying support services, as was discussed in Chapter One. These issues are beyond the scope of my analysis here, however applying awareness of them to the analysis suggests that the interpretative repertoire *every child needs a family* is a way of talking that constructs a somewhat ideal model and yet is drawn upon strongly, by that added emphasis on foster families 'of their own' (line 5).

The second sentence (lines 6–7) draws upon interpretative repertoires relating to international development – *development is about giving people skills and good development projects can be scaled up or replicated and continue after the developers have left*. I named the former interpretative repertoire using those words in order to summarise the familiar way of talking visible in the data, in which skills could be transferred and given to others. The extract above uses the words 'training of' (line 6). The rhetorical character of this interpretative repertoire comes from how it is a way of describing training and skills that links to important ideas in international development, such as empowerment, and also to moral authority. It resonates with claims by other INGOs working in child welfare in China that improving care practice and training staff are more of a problem than other issues, especially financial resources (e.g. Nyland and Nyland 2005 p. 291). Use of the analytic tool of subject positions shows that the orphanage staff are initially positioned as those who need training, and the reader is left to assume that they later develop into effective workers as a result of Xorg's training. In this extract the training results in placements – placements

are 'achieved' (line 6) through training – and there is clarification that the approach is of sound quality, being based on 'robust professional standards' (line 7), which are mentioned without elaboration, and a statement that the work 'can be replicated' (line 7) across the country. The idea that good development projects should be replicable has been prominent in the field of international development. It has particular significance in China, however, as rolling out projects that have been tested on a small scale has been acknowledged by development analysts as being part of the wider domestic Chinese model of development (e.g. Cook 2009).

Xorg is positioned as the provider of a strong development programme. Xorg is the active party in this account, which achieves a great sense of presence in China for the organisation particularly as a result of the quantification of Xorg's impact and activity across China. Some large numbers are introduced. There are '200,000 children in families' (line 2) and Xorg is very involved in activity in 'over 180 orphanages in 30 provinces' (line 8). The latter statement is inexact, given the official number of provinces (22 plus 4 municipalities, 5 autonomous regions and 2 special administrative regions); based on the list of sites in Xorg's most recent annual report at the time of my fieldwork, Xorg has a total of 30 project sites, which I understood to be orphanages they worked with, by having more than one site in some areas and none in others. The map at the end of the extract (described in lines 17–20) provides a visual representation of the coverage and influence of Xorg all over China and not just in the project sites.

Before beginning my fieldwork, I had understood Xorg to be a training organisation. Also, I had understood that child-welfare institutions were not permitted to transfer responsibility for the placement of children in state care to anyone else. In other data, members of Xorg staff told me that Xorg did not place children. Through what it says about training (line 6), the extract above is initially specific about what the organisation does, but then also suggests that the organisation is closely involved with the children's moves into families, and actually says that the placement of children in families is an organisational activity (line 9). NGO researchers such as Lewis and Kanji (2009) have distinguished between service delivery and advocacy roles of NGOs, noting the dilemma often presented by undertaking work for, and challenging the ideas of, the authorities; these researchers have also acknowledged that in practice such a distinction – between service delivery and advocacy – may be deceptive. Xorg could be both advocating, in the sense of introducing different or innovative ideas about care, and delivering a service in the form of the training it provides, and could be facing dilemmas over that dual role; none are acknowledged here, however. Service delivery, in terms of Xorg's having 'placed thousands of children' (line 9), emerges as the most important aspect of the work and the claims made for it extend beyond training to placing children in families. This emergence could create a dilemma, in the construction of organisational identity, between being a responsible development organisation, which in this extract is suggested to be one that trains others and introduces a programme that can then be replicated by others, and having a presence that irrefutably establishes the organisation as central to the development of foster care in

China. Xorg's being 'active' (line 8) in 180 institutions and placing children into families perhaps conflicts with training others to do the work (and also appears to be a considerable workload for the thirteen members of staff, a number which includes administrative and support staff (see Appendix One)). This extract does not wrestle with the dilemmas that I can see about NGO roles. It creates a great presence in China for Xorg by not mentioning any dilemmas, presenting all the ideas the text is drawing upon as compatible with each other: it claims that Xorg can perform all the necessary roles.

In the second paragraph of Extract 4a above (lines 12–15), the reader is told that 'it is agreed' (line 12) that foster care will receive greater public prominence, but who has made the agreement is unexplained. A claim is being made here without clear evidence. The government must have been one of the parties making the agreement, especially as it is going to be allocating government staff to projects (lines 13–15), but the other parties, if any, are not clearly stated. Someone has been putting pressure on the government for greater status and resources for foster care. There is an implication that Xorg did this, but that is not actually stated. Regardless of whether Xorg was part of this or not, the paragraph establishes that Xorg is working in a developing field (line 15). This positioning is related to an interpretative repertoire frequently drawn upon and an idea strongly promoted by the organisation: that *foster care in China is taking off*. This way of talking is used to support the message that Xorg is at the centre of developments. Given what the reader has been told in the first paragraph, the second conveys the message that Xorg will be working closely with the

government staff allocated to projects, thereby enhancing its working relationships with the authorities.

Annual reports have a publicity function as well as an accountability function. They usually explain what the charity does and why, in a way that the general reader can understand, and often translate what has been done into numbers. To an extent, annual reports are not expected to address the complexities of the work and all the problems that have been faced. However, this extract presents the reader with an organisational task that is particularly huge and a model for achieving it that is particularly uncomplicated. The 'impact in China' (line 1) is undiluted by any admission of possibly difficult situations in copying the work across China, or by any detail on how such difficulties are approached. This section of the report is illustrative of how Xorg often stresses the moral case for the work, using a persuasive moral conviction and the interpretative repertoire around *every child needs a family*; this section embraces both the idea that Xorg is a responsible development organisation that prepares others, and the idea that it is an organisation with considerable presence and involvement in the lives of children in state care in China.

In the use of the interpretative repertoire *every child needs a family*, other ideas are unacknowledged, for example ideas that the process of placing a child in a family with the resources to provide for the child's particular needs is complex and is also constrained by the contextual factors in China, or that for some children and young people a form of residential care may actually be more

suitable. Two of the issues in China are as follows: firstly, the high incidence of severe disabilities among children in state care – 95 per cent of the children in one institution studied had disabilities (Nyland and Nyland 2005 p. 292) – which are also related to the complexities around the number, (uneven) geographical distribution and nature of disabilities, and provision for disabled people generally (Stratford and Ng 2000); and secondly, the poverty in which some potential foster families live, particularly in rural areas, and the alleged use of foster care as part of poverty-relief programmes. There are many reasons why setting up any kind of foster-care programme, however defined, in China could be difficult. Some of the contextual issues were discussed in Chapter One; they include what some see as the limited extent of local and provincial government support and the limited capacity of the existing social work profession. In Extract 4a above, practicalities are not mentioned. That *every child needs a family* appears self-evidently true, and this interpretative repertoire serves the purpose of establishing a convincing moral foundation for the work. This perhaps resonates with other research that suggests that in some NGOs organisational identity is conceived in terms of legitimacy rather than public accountability (Ganesh 2003); in other words an identity is built around justifying the organisation's own existence. The emphasis is on a normative form of legitimacy and the organisation's mission statement is structured around a human interest issue, which, it is suggested, must be reconciled with the technical expertise that supports output legitimacy and the materialisation of objectives (Ossewaarde, Nijhof et al. 2008).

As an ethnographer, I am interested in the contrast between what is described in the extract above and what the director called the 'quiet time' that the organisation was experiencing when I was there. My impression of the organisation's success prior to my fieldwork had consisted of a picture of an ongoing, structured, rolling programme of training activity. My observations of the uncertainty around the training content and the training schedule, and references to other activities, left me unclear about what the organisation was doing. There were also indications that what the organisation did was unclear to others, as the following two examples illustrate. Firstly, at the opening ceremony for Xorg's new building, an invitee from a UK national body serving the business community asked me whether I would be working with the children or making any trips to rural areas. Secondly, a representative of an existing funder of Xorg, a charitable foundation connected to an energy trading company, visited Xorg for two days during my fieldwork. On the first day, I took the representative, W, on a trip to [Visit Place Two] and I accompanied them. W asked many questions about the foster-care process rather than the training process, such as how many children were placed, how the foster parents were selected and whether the foster parents were monitored. She also asked whether Xorg was shutting down orphanages. These two examples indicate some confusion. The organisation does not place children in families, and child-welfare institutions remain directly responsible for doing that. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, several members of staff told me that Xorg did not actually place the children, and indeed Xorg is a very small organisation with thirteen staff (see Appendix One) and has no staff based in child-welfare

institutions. A close relationship with the children's care was, however, widely publicised and formed part of the public identity of the organisation.

I am arguing that all of the aspects to the representation of the organisation's work in the extract above serve to build up the extent of the organisation's impact, thus functioning as part of a wider performance of success, and that representations of the organisation's work and performances of success are important activities in themselves. The reader is not only presented with the considerable bulk of the numbers, but also with the extensive scope of the organisation's involvement in what is represented as being the developing field of foster care. For the annual report-reading audience, Xorg presents success on a number of fronts: as trainer, care provider and influencer of government. Overall, in Extract 4a Xorg's work is represented as being of considerable magnitude.

As was indicated above, in Extract 4a the use of language depicts Xorg's work as guided by a fundamental underlying principle: the belief that children do better in families than institutions, drawing in talk on the interpretative repertoire *every child needs a family*. This principle was represented through the use of material objects too. In the Xorg office, along the corridors and up the stairs, there were beautiful, colourful pictures of foster families, and not pictures of trainees on training courses being run by this training organisation. Work on the iconography of childhood has suggested that images of children legitimate development work by NGOs, as they express humanitarian values

and a humanitarian identity (Manzo 2008). Images of children can legitimate a range of development organisations, but are perhaps even more significant for identity in the case of organisations working in child welfare, such as Xorg. The emphasis on children, and specifically children in families, could be seen in much of Xorg's promotional literature.

I am arguing that it is of significance that the pictures legitimate the work by featuring children in families and not the organisation's training work. One of the organisation's advertisements consisted of a picture of a child's face looking at the viewer over the back of an adult's shoulder, the child being held up in an embrace, with the following words:

- 1 For the first time, Li Li is able to view life from a pair of loving arms. When a
- 2 child feels loved, she has a different perspective on life. At [Xorg], our goal is to
- 3 find the many Li Lis in China a loving foster home. Give us a hand, give our
- 4 children a chance to grow up in a real home.

(Extract 4b, from organisational publicity)

The advertisement in Extract 4b draws on the interpretative repertoire *every child needs a family* and also on another, which I have called *love is transformative*. In this extract, 'when a child feels loved' (lines 1–2), then her outlook on life changes. The extract demarcates a 'real home' (line 4). The idea of children in families is championed. This is moral work, and this extract is also an example of how, at Xorg, the achievement of change was often attributed to values, such as being loving (lines 1–2).

This moral work legitimates activity in this area of child welfare. However, it also locates Xorg in child welfare in China. In this extract there is, again, not

only an indication that the organisation's work centres on children being in families, but also an implication of a close connection between Xorg and the act of finding the family home for the child. Xorg's goal is explicitly stated here as being 'to find the many Li Lis in China a loving foster home' (line 3). 'Our children' (lines 3–4) could be children Xorg is claiming to have taken responsibility for in a professional capacity, or they could be all children together, the next generation of 'our' community, or world. I am arguing that advertisements such as these function to locate Xorg at the centre of provision for children in state care in China and that achieving centrality is part of the performance of success.

Xorg also used a promotional DVD; the question of the role of the audience in the construction of organisational identities and the performance of success is illustrated by my discussion, below, of the audience to whom the promotional DVD may be speaking. The DVD's voiceover narration quoted below in Extract 4c is given over images of children in institutions and in foster families; of foster families doing daily activities such as eating, washing clothes and undertaking personal care such as brushing hair; and of the director of Xorg with institutional staff and officials:

- 1 [Xorg] began work in 1998 with a simple mission: to help the Chinese
- 2 government move children out of orphanages and into families in the local
- 3 community.
- 4
- 5 Since then the lives of many children have been transformed as they have
- 6 experienced the love and care of a family for the first time. [...]
- 7
- 8 B, the founder of [Xorg], believes that when placed into the long-term care of a
- 9 loving family, a child can usually recover from their traumatic start in life and
- 10 develop into a healthy, well-adjusted member of society.

11
 12 'When I came to China I just saw there was so much that we could support and
 13 help and, and it's been a real privilege really to just be a small part of what's
 14 happening in China, there's a tremendous transformation happening in
 15 childcare here.'
 16
 17 Foster care enables orphaned and disabled children to enjoy an ordinary family
 18 life, an environment that offers them individual attention, love and care.
 19
 20 It is vital that children form healthy family relationships and see themselves as
 21 part of the wider community. [...]
 22
 23 What sets [Xorg] apart from other organisations is that they work in
 24 partnership with the Chinese government.
 25
 26 [Xorg] has a vision to see one million children placed in families by the year
 27 2010.

(Extract 4c, from my transcription of voiceover on Xorg promotional DVD)

This is a particular explanation of the organisation's work. Children are in institutions (line 2); Xorg helps the Chinese government move children into families (lines 1–3); the lives of children are transformed (line 5); and the children become well-adjusted members of society (line 10). Again, this draws on the interpretative repertoires *every child needs a family* and *love is transformative*. It is a simple model, indeed the narrative begins by describing the work of helping to move children into families as 'a simple mission' (line 1). This positions Xorg's solution to the problem as unproblematic. On the surface, it is a good-news story in terms of improving child welfare and achieving development through partnership (line 24).

The DVD narration is in English, and the DVD appeared to be a promotional item that could be distributed to funders in the West. The text speaks to a number of audiences, however. My analysis shows how the problem Xorg exists to address and the ways in which it is addressing that problem are

depicted in relation to, and shaped by understandings of interactions with, wider audiences. The narrative could, at some moments, be speaking to the Chinese government in its encouragement of the transformation in child welfare and its apparent understanding that changes in care are led by the Chinese authorities and that Xorg's own role is in terms of how it can assist. The text contains the phrases 'to help the Chinese government' (lines 1–2), to 'help' and 'be a small part of' (line 13), and to work 'in partnership with the Chinese government' (lines 23–4). The narrative could, at other moments, be speaking to staff in child-welfare institutions, and also the Chinese public, some of whom are not familiar with the arguments for family care or the idea of social work (Tong, Keung et al. 2009). The narration contains four sentences that give an explanation of why foster care is beneficial (lines 5–6, 8–10, 17–18 and 20–1). At the same time, the narration could be speaking to those actors in and around the international-development arena who wish to hear of transformation in the sense of radical change and progress: there is transformation in children's lives (line 5) and in child welfare (lines 14–15). Research suggests that managers of INGOs feel obliged to promise transformation, because of the increased marketisation and professionalisation of development (Mowles 2007). And finally, the extract could be speaking to other supporters, perhaps companies looking for opportunities in corporate social responsibility, or individuals who wish to know that Xorg is influential, in the right place at the right time, and worthy of support.

The language of the interpretative repertoire *every child needs a family* is again drawn upon to provide a moral foundation for the work. Once more, however, I see a dilemma between establishing Xorg as a good development organisation, drawing on the interpretative repertoire *good development projects are conducted with local partners*, and establishing Xorg as the crux of developments. While I see a dilemma, however, the text does not wrestle with this dilemma; instead, it just places both ideas side by side. There is a sophisticated literature in development studies about the nature of partnership, which debates whether partnership is more about persuasive and impressive talk or results (Brinkerhoff 2002). In Extract 4c, a general undelineated idea of partnership seems to be important – care is taken to mention the word ‘partnership’ (line 24), and yet at the same time it is also resisted. On the one hand, Xorg is helping the Chinese government (lines 1–2) and being ‘a small part’ (line 13) of the change that is happening. On the other hand, Xorg’s help is transforming individual children’s lives (line 5) and helping to increase the number of ‘well-adjusted’ members of Chinese society as a whole (line 10). Xorg has ‘so much’ (line 12) to offer. Xorg is positioned as having a very central role in the achievement of the one million placements it envisions. Meanwhile, the Chinese government is being assisted and the children are having their lives transformed. This extract talks of a ‘tremendous transformation’ (line 14). The interpretative repertoire *foster care in China is taking off* is again used in a way which positions Xorg at the centre of this development. What is not said is again important for the performance of success. There is no acknowledgement of other aspects of the

context, such as those initiatives run by the other child-welfare INGOs, and while this might indeed not be expected, the effect is to boost Xorg's own role.

Other constructions of successful identities revolved around the idea that success involves transformation, and this notion figured in a number of the more public representations of the organisation's work, particularly in stories that built success, as illustrated by my fieldnotes. The second day of W's visit to Xorg, mentioned above, was spent in Xorg's office, and I was invited to join a meeting with the director (B), and some Xorg staff. In that meeting, B said that M, who was at that moment in [Visit Place One], had telephoned the evening before to say that he had got a boy walking – a boy whom they had never seen walk before. B said that there were a lot of children in beds in this orphanage. B also talked about directors of orphanages being in tears when they could see what could be done for the children and the transformations that could take place when 'the hard side' came down. I understood 'the hard side' to be a defensive, rigid, unemotional stance.

B also told the story of when a UK peer, who was or who had been the Chair of Xorg's UK Board of Trustees and subsequently became an Honorary Patron of Xorg, was visiting a village and was told by local people that the whole village had been transformed by the foster-care programme, because people had thought 'well if they are doing that for the orphans, why don't we do that for ourselves' and had tidied up their houses.

These short stories, about the boy who started walking and the development of the village, were set in the context of a meeting with a representative of a funder, preceded by the presentation of staff credentials and followed by a discussion of the work Xorg would be doing internationally in Thailand. They present complete and radical change at an individual and community level. There is a switch to mobility for the boy and the conversion of the village. It is almost miraculous.

The representative of a funder, W, had in fact already been told this story by J the day before. I had recorded in my fieldnotes that J had spoken about the situation in that village in which the foster care project had had a positive impact on the whole village and had transformed the village. J had said that it had restored the relationships between husbands and wives and restored people's confidence; the homes involved in the foster-care project had had a positive influence on their neighbours and in the end the whole village had been influenced. This story, with its considerable claims for the beneficial effects of foster care on living conditions, self-esteem and marital relationships, was a popular story circulating within Xorg. I had been casually told the story myself one day in the office when I was quite new. It is of course possible that foster care did improve living conditions and self-esteem. Nevertheless, the fact that the programme is bringing personal and community development to a village will have implications for the nature of the childcare provided and will determine a particular kind of foster-care provision. Discussion of the implications of this is missing, and while this may be expected, the omission

highlights the use of the story as a form of social action as significant.

Organisational stories can be used 'as poetic elaborations on actual events, as wish-fulfilling fantasies built on everyday experience' (Gabriel and Griffiths 2004 p. 124). By creating symbolic elaborations, this story perhaps functions to ward off a different type of discussion about the work. I am also arguing that the story amplifies the transformative impact of the organisation's work, and that this amplification is part of the construction and performance of success.

The idea of transformation also appeared in talk about impact at the wider societal level above the individual and local community. The lines shown in Extract 4d below followed a discussion of evaluation of the organisation's work in the interview between E and R:

- 1 E Are you generally happy with the information from the research and
2 evaluation trips?
3
4 R I think that's probably a question which the training team have to
5 answer.
6
7 E OK.
8
9 R Especially J, he would be the best person to answer that. Whether,
10 whether we are achieving our targets. My understanding is, generally,
11 yes we are happy, but like many charity organisations, you know, we
12 can recognise there is a lot more work that needs to be done at any one
13 time. I don't think we're looking at finishing our job soon, that we have
14 started. Having said that, what I would say is that everything that,
15 because the way we work is very strategic, and it's empowering, and it's,
16 it's hopefully creating something sustainable. It's not just here's some
17 money to do something, and if we stop that thing stops. We are
18 empowering people to not only do the work themselves, but to actually
19 train other people so that it will spread and it will grow in areas where
20 we've never even visited, we've never even trained people in, and so
21 what I would like to think is that at any one point if we did stop,
22 suddenly, we've left behind a legacy that is going to continue, and, and
23 that can only be a good thing, you know.

(Extract 4d, from interview between E and R)

In this extract a question about information on the outcome of the organisation's work ultimately leads to something much less tangible. R initially deflects the question but then gives another response. The language in R's second response resonates with development speak and includes the buzzwords of 'empowering' (line 15) and 'sustainable' (line 16). The extract draws upon the interpretative repertoires mentioned above – *development is about giving people skills* and *good development projects can be scaled up or replicated and continue after the developers have left*. The way Xorg is presented is persuasive, in that the way 'we' (line 15) work is deliberately planned and calculated and is in contrast to development projects that 'just' give money (line 16). This is perhaps a reference to aid dependency and, if so, R is using a common criticism of development organisations to deflect other criticisms he perhaps anticipates. This idea contrasts with suggestions in the literature that community financing of welfare services may have averted a welfare crisis (Adams and Hannum 2005 p. 120). In Xorg's case, the recipients will be able both to do the work and to train others (lines 18–19). This claim again relates to the interpretative repertoire *development is about giving people skills*. It also relates, however, to the confusion in my fieldnotes about the type of training Xorg was providing. While 'training the trainer' was talked about, the materials appeared to be about the content of foster care, rather than about how to train foster carers.

In Extract 4d above, the idea of those who are trained training others is used to form the basis for the significant claim that the work will develop in places Xorg has 'never even visited' (line 20). The explanation of the organisation's work

generated in this interview between R and E conceives of a situation in which the organisation bequeaths developments to child welfare in China in areas which it has not at any time visited. Xorg is positioned as handing down a gift to its successors, and therefore as being powerful, having an influence on future generations, and being likely to be remembered for having had a significant presence in history. This representation is a building up of success in terms of success having a far-reaching impact now and in the future. This performance does not involve the complexities of how those areas not visited and the children and institutional staff in them might be different. It draws very strongly on the interpretative repertoire *good development projects can be scaled up or replicated and continue after the developers have left* which is partly used as a moral justification and linked to sustainability and people not being dependent on Xorg. In the performance of a research interview by E and R, success in this moment depends more on future legacy and wider social change than on personal stories of what has already been done, as is the case in the data generated in the meeting with a funder and the stories about the boy and the village discussed above. The talk of transformation varies, and success is built up slightly differently, in these different contexts.

Success was often a matter of scale and presence. It was entangled with references to power, and sometimes quite direct claims of power were made. The organisation's official 'Vision & Mission' includes the lines:

1 The organisation is working in partnership with national and local government
2 in China to introduce foster care and other strategic initiatives to relieve
3 hardship, distress and sickness, and to enrich the lives of orphans and other
4 disadvantaged children.

(Extract 4e, from most recent annual report at time of fieldwork)

In these few lines, Xorg is doing the introducing (line 2), which presumably involves beginning initiatives, and familiarising others with the initiatives, and thus being in the necessary position to do so. This position may involve a 'partnership' (line 1) with the authorities, perhaps a use of the interpretative repertoire *good development projects are conducted with local partners*, but the implication is that these Chinese authorities need Xorg to start these initiatives.

Similarly, the summer 2007 newsletter stated:

1 [Xorg] and China Social Work Association have officially signed a new
2 agreement which will expand the national project to an additional 15 provinces,
3 bringing the total to 30. [...]
4
5 The agreement took affect [sic] immediately, and the new project sites are being
6 visited by [Xorg's] research & evaluation teams to build relationships with local
7 authorities, and determine how best to establish family placement programmes
8 (permanency planning), as an alternative to institutional care in their
9 communities.
10
11 This is an exciting development for [Xorg], and an encouraging 'vote of
12 confidence' from the Chinese government. Through training and other strategic
13 initiatives to empower and equip local family placement workers, together we
14 anticipate a bright future for children throughout China who need a family of
15 their own.

(Extract 4f, from newsletter to supporters)

This is another example of the suggestion of introducing, here 'to establish', foster care (line 7). Using the analytical tool of subject positions to consider how organisations and institutions are being positioned in this moment, it becomes clear that Xorg is acting without delay and the institutions are 'being visited' (lines 5–6) and the local authorities are having relationships built with them (lines 6–7); while Xorg is researching and evaluating to 'determine' (line 7) how

to set up foster-care programmes. Xorg is positioned as having the decision-making power here; it has considerable control.

In addition to another reference to 30 provinces (line 3), rather than 30 sites among the official 22 provinces plus other administrative regions, Extract 4f also contains use of the interpretative repertoires around providing others with skills and working in partnership. This extract stresses the recognised and bona fide relationship that forms the partnership with the Chinese government. There is enhanced recognition of Xorg's work in the form of the 'new agreement' (lines 1–2), which expands the existing project and is a 'vote of confidence' (lines 11–12). The extract ends with a return to the familiar moral foundation of the work, discussed earlier in this chapter, which will 'equip' (line 13) workers to provide 'a bright future' (line 14) for children 'who need a family of their own' (lines 14–15).

Identity work thus builds success for Xorg by drawing on a number of ideas and interpretative repertoires. Many of these are used to locate Xorg as central to developments in child welfare in China. During my fieldwork, the organisation not only located itself in child welfare in China and in relation to the Chinese authorities, but also contextualised its work through representations of relationships with other important people and places, constructing and performing success in that way too. It is to this contextualisation which I now turn.

Contextualising Xorg's position

I shall begin by examining some examples of how Xorg represented its relationship with funders. Extract 4g below is also an example of how, despite my focus on understanding rather than evaluating what was being done by Xorg, I nevertheless found myself pursuing some claims that I was concerned were false.

- 1 E When you say that children have been placed in families, like I think in
2 one of the little publicity little things [a flyer], it says [Xorg] has placed
3 [children], is, like is that a strategy, or is there something about you feel
4 you have to express the work in that way, because I mean [Xorg] staff
5 aren't placing the children, are they, but what, what, all I mean is, I am
6 just interested in all the factors that lead you to present the work in that
7 way.
8
9 B Sure, well, there's, there's, there's, there's a very big difference between
10 training and working as a consultant for the Chinese government in
11 partnership and then selling that to a funder, a donor, whose donation is
12 not going necessarily to [Xorg] but to the project, so the project has
13 placed this amount of children. There are different parts of the project
14 that are involved. [Xorg] is involved in that, CSWA [China Social Work
15 Association] is involved in that, Civil Affairs [the government
16 department], local and national, are involved in that, and so we talk
17 about Vision for a Million, it's a vision, you know, it's not reality. I don't
18 know if we will ever get to a million, maybe we will, but that's a goal set
19 for, for fundraising, and, and, you know, when we first talked about it, I
20 had, you know, I had some issues around that, but other people assured
21 me that that's, that's perfectly legible [sic] when you're talking about
22 developing visions.

(Extract 4g, from interview between E and B)

This confrontational exchange from the interview between E and B begins with E asking B about the claims Xorg is making about placing children in families. E begins by making somewhat of a veiled criticism of these claims, trivialising the 'little publicity little things' (line 2), yet at the same time indicating that they are important enough to warrant a challenge to what they contain. In a wordy way she asks why Xorg is saying it places children in families when it does not. This

is perhaps unusual for a sociological research interview and is a little journalistic in the way that it sets up the construction of this section of data. E's challenge provides the context for the performance which is B's response. To some extent E sets up a right-and-wrong framework for this section of the interview. Towards the end of her question, however, E backtracks on the disapproving tone of her language, as if she has done something inappropriate and is herself the guilty party, having done something wrong, saying 'all I mean is', and that she is 'just interested' (lines 5–6).

After a little hesitation, B initially draws on the interpretative repertoire I called *the demands of funders are constraining and not necessarily in organisations' interests*. He sets out the different tasks that he and Xorg must perform, in particular doing the work, on the one hand, and 'selling' (line 11) it to a funder, on the other. It is not clear where B says the funds are going. He seems to be saying that funders are not 'necessarily' (line 12) funding Xorg, but that they are funding the project; it is not clear whether they realise this. If this is the case, however, then B has in this moment turned Xorg into a funder itself, an intermediary that raises money elsewhere and then passes it on. In this role as funder, which does not necessarily exclude the other roles of Xorg, such as trainer, B suggests that Xorg is entitled to claim the project's results as its own. The project has placed children (lines 12–13). In this way he conflates the work of the project of foster care in China, on the one hand, with the work of Xorg, on the other, although in the same moment he is talking about other parties connected with the work and considerately acknowledging the other partners

involved in a way in which Xorg is less of the leader and more of one contributor among many (lines 13–16): Xorg is working in partnership as good development organisations do, *good development projects are conducted with local partners*, and balancing that with the demands of the funding world.

B suddenly moves to talking about the ‘Vision for a Million’ (line 17). He abdicates any responsibility for reaching this goal. He spells out to E that ‘it’s not reality’ (line 17) and is only a vision. Here, it is expressly not a target. Again he differentiates between the fundraising work and the other work (lines 18–19). Initially B places responsibility for the representation of the work, including anything misleading, as implied by E, onto the funders. However, separating what is suitable for different kinds of activities is also important for the construction of an organisational identity in which the organisation is effective. B also performs some personal identity work in this extract. He has the ability to understand the difference between fundraising goals and other activities. He also protects himself and does not take on too much responsibility himself for something that E has implied is questionable. He is a responsible leader who questions things – he ‘had some issues’ (line 20), and he listens to others’ assurances (line 20), perhaps with a measure of healthy scepticism. He ultimately supports having an effective vision, as good leaders would. I am arguing that this performance of a research interview between E and the director is relevant when looking at the construction and performance of success, as it is a performance of knowing how to fundraise and of being in

control of what is done for funders in terms of selling the project to meet their needs.

At other times, in other interactional contexts, the idea that successful organisations work in partnership with funders was more dominant. The next extract, Extract 4h (a), begins with E drawing on the interpretative repertoire *the demands of funders are constraining and not necessarily in organisations' interests*.

This way of talking resonates with a large academic literature on how funders' demands constrain NGO action, although those demands are also resisted (Ebrahim 2003). E does not draw strongly on the vocabulary of that repertoire, but asks rather innocently about the effects of the ways the funding world works on Xorg's own work. R responds to E by providing an answer that challenges that way of talking.

- 1 E Thinking about funders, is there anything about attracting funders or,
2 you know, reporting back to them, and things like that, which affects
3 what the organisation can do or how it works?
4
5 R Well, we've generally taken a fairly firm line with fundraising in that
6 the Board, the UK Board, have almost sort of completely vetoed what's
7 called restricted funding, which is where funds within the general pot of
8 money funds are set aside. It's a sort of function within UK Charity Law,
9 which, you know, there are organisations that will come forward and
10 say we'll give you x amount of money as a grant, this will cover a one-
11 year period, but you're not allowed to spend it on this, you're not
12 allowed to spend it on this, we want the money spent in this way. I
13 think for organisations that are just starting and especially if that
14 happens to match the, you know the criteria that they want, then that's,
15 that's fine, but generally that approach hasn't been so helpful for us. I
16 mean, what that's based on, where that comes from, is funders wanting
17 to make sure they get, you know, a good investment for their money,
18 not a financial investment, but an investment into the region where their
19 money is going. But effectively we feel we're mature enough to say well
20 we know best. I don't think there are any other foreign organisations
21 that know better than us, some of them might know just as well, but we
22 are at the forefront.

(Extract 4h (a), from interview between E and R)

This is a strong performance of power and control on the part of the organisation by R. It turns familiar ideas about funding constraints and relationships with funders on their head and is an unexpected response. He challenges the interpretative repertoire and common-sense knowledge that *the demands of funders are constraining and not necessarily in organisations' interests* to present Xorg as doing something different and being more in control. E asks how funders affect what the organisation can do and R explains that Xorg takes a 'fairly firm line' (line 5) and is 'mature enough' (line 19); in fact, he claims, 'we know best' (line 20). The organisation is strong enough for the board to have actually 'vetoed' (line 6) a form of funding. An analysis of positioning in this extract shows that R places Xorg 'at the forefront' (line 22), unsurpassed by 'any other foreign organisations' (line 20), and different to 'organisations that are just starting' (line 13). I am arguing that this is a performance of success, and one based on being at the leading edge and being in control. R continues:

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 23 | R | There might be times when we have had to turn down funding, which |
| 24 | | may have limited the work, or may not, I don't think it has really. I |
| 25 | | think though what's happened is if we are getting grants or long-term |
| 26 | | funding from donors, we are really looking at getting the kind of |
| 27 | | funding which is, well working with the kind of donors who want to |
| 28 | | have more of a partnership with us rather than a one-way funding |
| 29 | | programme where, you know, you apply for the grant, you get it, and |
| 30 | | then after a year you write a nice report, and we would rather work |
| 31 | | with funders who want to know what we are doing, want to contribute |
| 32 | | but allow us to manage it. So if we are having difficulty we can still go |
| 33 | | to them and say what do you think, if it was up to us we, we listen, we |
| 34 | | might not follow their advice, or we might. It's up to us. Those are the |
| 35 | | best. I guess that's the ideal which any charitable organisation would |
| 36 | | want. I guess the stage which, we are quite unique in what we do, to be |
| 37 | | able to say to people well, give us your advice, we may follow it or not |
| 38 | | as the case might be. And they are happy with that, and if they're not |
| 39 | | it's probably not going to work anyway. |

(Extract 4h (b), from interview between E and R)

R says that Xorg is looking at funders who want a 'partnership with us' (line 28) and 'allow us to manage it' (line 32). Xorg calls on funders as and when but does not relinquish overall control. R expressly states that although Xorg listens to funders 'we might not follow their advice, or we might. It's up to us' (lines 33–4). Xorg is positioned as choosing its funders. There is some implication that the nature of the field of work supports this position, perhaps as not many people are informed about it or not as informed about it as Xorg, which is 'unique' (line 36). Xorg knows which kinds of funders are 'best' (lines 34–5) and which are going to be 'happy' (line 38) working with Xorg in the way it likes to work with funders. This perhaps goes further than the idea that successful organisations work in partnership with funders and presents Xorg as the dominant party in the partnership.

R refers to this kind of partnership as constituting 'the ideal' (line 35), but the language before that is already working to persuade the reader that this ideal is actually in operation. This is so strong that, in speculation, I wonder whether there was a significant degree of denial of the pressure or influence from funders on the shape of the work in this moment. This performance of success is partly based on conforming to an ultimate standard of how organisations might like relationships with funders to be in an ideal world. It contextualises Xorg in a relationship with funders in international development in which Xorg is in a very strong position.

The work of Xorg was also contextualised through constructions of the wider international arena and of Xorg's relationship to people and places within that. In their interview, B and E talk about the big developments in the work of the organisation, and, following a discussion about the development of the school and clinic, E asks B about the organisation's work in Thailand. B tells a story about how the organisation came to be doing some work in Thailand. I have divided this story into three sections for analysis: Extract 4i (a), Extract 4i (b) and Extract 4i (c).

- 1 E And then Thailand. Was that kind of similar, like you kind of got the
2 chance, you met the right people and got the chance, so you thought, I
3 mean, what's the thinking behind that?
4
5 B Well the Thailand, I mean there's been several countries that have seen
6 what we have done in China. I think the initial one was India and, you
7 know, we got asked to go there, and obviously as a small organisation
8 could not have taken on India and China, and so had to say no. Since
9 then there have been others like Russia and some countries in Africa.
10 And that's really through our supporters. Also I think our supporters
11 have been sort of saying, always encouraging us to press out of, move
12 out of China, but I've held that very firmly in the sense that what we do
13 well is place children in families in China, and that's it. And I think
14 that's what our success has been.

(Extract 4i (a), from interview between E and B)

This story places the core work of the organisation in a particular kind of international context. Some of the characters or players in the story are entities or groups of people rather than individual personae. Some are big entities, in fact they include the 'several countries' (line 5) which 'have seen what we have done' (lines 5–6) – an explicit reference to the organisation's success. These countries include India, Russia and some countries in Africa. Their having 'seen' (line 5) presents them as actors in this short story, rather than as distant governments, and they are not only observing but have some power to do

something based on their observations. B is also making it known that the supporters are facilitative here, although it is not clear how that works. There is perhaps some use of the interpretative repertoire *good development projects can be scaled up or replicated*. The key causal link made early in the story, however, is that what the organisation has done is leading to its being asked to do more work elsewhere, in other words good work is the cause of future development, rather than any function within the project design that would mean replication was appropriate or that would facilitate replication. The depiction of this causal process is another way in which success is built up. The presence of the powerful entities, introduced early on, also creates some of the suspense that makes it a good story – we, all of us involved in this story including the audience, know we are going to Thailand but how will we get there, surrounded as we currently are by all these other weighty places. I am arguing that the position of Xorg is contextualised within an international network of powerful actors and entities.

Another part in the story is played by the 'we' (lines 6, 7 and 12) that is used to represent the organisation. The 'we' is mainly represented as a dependable force for good, which is rather in the background in this story but is a solid presence nonetheless, and the reader can imagine the 'we' getting on with work that has been correctly identified as appropriate and doing it well. What Xorg does well is 'place children in families in China' (line 13); this is specifically identified as the focus of the organisation's success (line 14). Then there are the supporters (line 10), who are very supportive, but whose causal power is,

interestingly, limited by B himself. The supporters have been keen for various actions outside China to take place (lines 11–12), but thus far their calls have been resisted. B claims to deal personally with the supporters and keep them in check when he says ‘I’ve held that very firmly’ (line 12). In contrast to NGOs in which supporters may need cajoling to back new and especially ambitious and potentially risky initiatives put forward by enthusiastic members of staff, in this story it is B who has shouldered the responsibility of keeping the organisation on the right track and protecting it from distractions coming from its own supporters. In a way similarly to that in Extract 4h above, the interpretative repertoire *the demands of funders are constraining and not necessarily in organisations’ interests* is turned on its head. The impression created is that Xorg is so successful that the supporters’ demands are not around typical concerns, perhaps containing the work within specific boundaries or reporting requirements, but are around flexible international expansion.

B’s personal identity work is also evident here. B himself is a significant individual in this account. B constructs himself as personally protecting the highly successful work of the organisation, containing it within appropriate boundaries, and taking careful decisions about expansion, with due professional regard for the scope of the organisation’s mission. Moreover, there are tones of moral authority, as well as successful leadership, in the suggestion that it is important to be realistic about what can be achieved, and so to do things like ‘say no’ (line 8) to India, and to be firm and not to be pressured into doing anything against one’s better judgement, even by one’s own supporters.

B seems to be somewhat of a lone figure and his power appears to be personal, quite separate from that of the organisation, and to emanate from his doing the right thing, and the fact and manner of his communication with the right people. B continues:

- 15 B After the Tsunami everybody went sort of bananas about raising money
16 for Tsunami and, and really, you know, I told our lot to stay out of this,
17 because it really wasn't on our mandate, and rightly so, but I did get
18 invited down to Thailand, and the opportunity to give advice, and some
19 training. And what I saw was lots of people going in, lots of money
20 building residential establishments and, and I remember being in the
21 office with the vice minister when he said we've just been given £65
22 million for the children of Thailand from the Tsunami and we only have
23 something like 68 children that are truly affected, you know, and so,
24 again, just talking to like the [name] Club and a, a French NGO, just
25 saying why are you doing this, you know, building a village for 100 kids,
26 there's not that many kids going to need it and today, you know I
27 visited it recently, and there's like one child in this massive, but it seems
28 like, again, when you have a disaster like this, people go from their own
29 warm fuzzy feelings and wanting to deal and help people rather than to
30 think strategically.

(Extract 4i (b), from interview between E and B)

After the Tsunami, while 'everybody' (line 15) was going 'sort of bananas' (line 15), B is 'invited' (line 18) to Thailand. B is given an 'opportunity' (line 18), and so notably has not imposed himself, and takes it up in order to give advice and training (lines 18–19). This talk uses the interpretative repertoire *development is about giving people skills*. Providing advice and training in this context carries moral authority, and is in contrast to the reference to money (line 19). 'Warm fuzzy feelings' (line 29) implies some amateurish responses to the aftermath of this natural disaster and positions Xorg as professional. The description of activity after the Tsunami uses what could be an additional interpretative repertoire about post-disaster 'do-gooder' impulsiveness and relates to an

interpretative repertoire I shall discuss in Chapter Five, called *some NGOs are unprofessional*.

Further suspense is introduced into the story with the ‘£65 million’ for ‘68 children’ (lines 21–3). I am arguing that this has an important function, as it can then be resolved. In the final section in Extract 4i (c) below, it is calmly resolved by some measured action on the part of Xorg, including a pilot training workshop in Thailand. Other significant individuals are appearing in the story – the vice minister (Extract 4i (b), line 21) and the friend who is a member of the royal family (Extract 4i (c), lines 32–3) – although they are positioned as more passive than B and their role is limited to being providers and receivers of information. B continues:

- 31 B So during post-Tsunami what I was doing was talking to the
32 government and through a friend who is a member of the royal family
33 in Thailand you know, get the children back into the communities, into
34 kinship families, aunts, uncles, grandparents, you know, the *last* thing
35 you want to do is pull all these kids out of their little fishing villages and
36 put them into an institution in Bangkok, and so there was a dialogue
37 started, and they then asked if we would come and train the
38 government staff and it was all set, and then there was a bit of a political
39 upheaval last year in Thailand, so it was all put on hold, and then they
40 came back to us beginning of this year, and I think this probably
41 knocked us off our course a bit because, you know, I think they came
42 back to us in January and said can you do June and so it was like
43 everybody scrambled to get this and we’re holding it lightly, we’re not
44 saying that we’re going to chase after it but Thailand to me could be
45 doable, if we were going to move out anywhere, Russia certainly or
46 India would be, you know, much too big to take on, but the willingness
47 and the close proximity of Thailand would be, it’s something that is
48 doable, so let’s go and try and see, see how things go, and so there’s no
49 promises, but given the enthusiasm and the willingness, you know, we
50 ran a two-day pilot training workshop down there and, and really
51 engaged the people, they were really switched on by it.

(Extract 4i (c), from interview between E and B)

B performs some personal identity work as he indicates how, in contrast to how others responded, 'what I was doing was talking to the government' (lines 31–2). Considered as part of the whole story, starting with Extract 4i (a) above, there is an implication that this access is derived from Xorg's success. In addition to highlighting his good contacts and the use he makes of them, this part of the story makes another key causal link (following on from good work leading to expansion, mentioned in Extract 4i (a)). Here, targeting, talking to the right people, and starting a dialogue, lead to greater things. The small size of the organisation is acknowledged at the beginning of the story as a reason why the organisation could not have 'taken on India' (line 8 in Extract 4i (a)). In the end, however, size is not stopping the organisation from working in Thailand, and now the importance of size is further minimised under the impact of the strategic use of targeted action. This is morally sensible as are activities like having a 'dialogue' (line 36).

The end of the story returns to big entities, specifically Thailand. I am arguing that the building up of the nature of Xorg's link with Thailand, in this extract, is a performance of success. References to previous good work, and doing things in the right way, lead to a resolution in which Thailand has become 'doable' (line 45), which is also helped by a degree of personification and the attribution of human qualities such as 'willingness' (line 46).

Research has shown that effective NGO leaders balance competing pressures and demands from stakeholders in ways that do not jeopardise their individual

identity and values (Hailey and James 2004). B produces a rendition of this ideal in which he works with different stakeholders, including governments in different countries and Xorg's supporters, and yet maintains a strong moral stance and continues to create the success of the organisation. That a story is generated in the interview between E and B is of significance. It is an epic story. Epic stories focus on achievement and success, strongly feature pride, and often have a hero to be admired (Gabriel and Griffiths 2004 p. 120). In addition to B's own personal identity work, the story tells us that Xorg is well-placed globally, well connected, influential, successful, responsible with its remit, and strategically effective.

The development of my fieldnotes shows that the activity in Thailand initially seemed to me to be a distraction from what I thought was the core task of delivering training to support provision for children in state care in China. However, I came to see this activity and representations of it as essential to the significant work of sustaining and contextualising the organisation's success, as they position Xorg as professional and as influential internationally. This relates to my first research question.

Analysis of my fieldnotes indicated other ways, apart from through the discursive constructions of success in texts, in which the contextualisation of the organisation was done. For example, Xorg was linked to the international elite by various means, in addition to in accounts such as B's above. Xorg's office was in the suburbs of Beijing, in a residential area with an unusually, for Beijing,

open, spacious and quiet feel, occupied by a wealthy community of expatriates and wealthy Chinese living in large, detached, low-storey villas and sometimes frequenting the Clubhouse, which had hotel facilities, a gym and an expensive shop selling Western products. The office building was relatively newly built and I understood that it had previously been occupied by a high-profile, international, private school. The signage on the outside of the building was all in English.

The building was very light with floor-to-ceiling windows on the ground and first floors. The offices were smart, and furnished with modern office furniture, including curvy desks, partition boards between desks, and potted plants. 'Emily on placement from the Open University in the UK' became a special feature pointed out to visitors being shown round the building (the understanding generating the reference to 'on placement' was discussed in Chapter One in relation to the 'internship'). The design and décor of the building, the area and the Clubhouse, along with the luxury of the trainees' accommodation and the conference-style layout and décor of the training room, were of particular significance at the time of the training courses run in Xorg's building. The relatively affluent environment and a certain formality enhanced a presentation of professionalism.

Xorg's position was also contextualised by reference to important people. In a recent annual report, a quotation from Tony Blair states, 'I commend the co-operation between the UK and China in the field of social welfare through

[Xorg]'. The same document also contains a quotation from Sarah, Duchess of York, saying, 'I fully endorse the work of [Xorg], and I am amazed at the number of children's lives that have been enriched by their work in China', and a quotation from Sir Richard Branson saying, '[Xorg] are a visionary charity with a strategic plan to help disadvantaged children'. I was told in a telephone meeting prior to my departure that the UK Prime Minister might be opening Xorg's new training centre in the New Year.

During my time with the organisation, the ceremony to open the centre officially did indeed take place, as the organisation had moved into the new building just a few months before. This ceremony contextualised the organisation within a network of important people. The ceremony itself consisted of a performance on traditional Chinese drums by children from the high-profile, international, private school and a simultaneous lion dance by a group of adults from elsewhere when the VIPs arrived, followed by short speeches by B, by the wife of a senior UK Cabinet member, and by a senior figure from the China Social Work Association (this was interpreted into English by J). A crowd of invitees had gathered outside the building, and after the speeches everyone proceeded inside to listen to a choir, also from the international, private school. The people attending included the British ambassador's wife and a couple of embassy staff, a group of people from the China Social Work Association (including two who would be joining the training department), friends of B, and the head teacher and other members of staff from the school. The lunch was Western food: mushroom soup and bread,

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gammon with pineapple or salmon, chocolate mousse cake or apple pie, and fruit juice, red wine and coffee. Central to the opening ceremony were a high-profile, international, private school; the wife of a key UK politician; the wife of the British ambassador; and other British embassy staff. These British or international figures enjoyed an archetypal Western meal, which perhaps also served to emphasise the organisation's international position.

High-profile, Chinese, public figures were also used to contextualise the work of the organisation. A newsletter to supporters states:

- 1 Newly appointed as the face of XS [hotel chain and funder], and star of films
- 2 such as 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon' and 'Memoirs of a Geisha', Zhang
- 3 Ziyi expressed her wish to support [hotel chain and funder]'s partnership with
- 4 [Xorg] to help place children from institutions into local families.

(Extract 4j, from newsletter to supporters)

In this piece of organisational literature, the work of placing children in families is reinforced by reference to a member of Xorg's wider network. Zhang Ziyi is a celebrated Chinese actress, who is well known internationally. This is a further example of the contextualisation of Xorg. It, like the other examples in the second part of this chapter, functions to persuade readers of Xorg's influence and success. Contextualising the organisation with important people and places was part of the performances of success and part of building up successful organisational identities.

Conclusion

This chapter shows how successful identities are built up as Xorg is located as central to child welfare in China and as it is contextualised in an international

network of important people and places. The chapter examines what the organisation and the individuals within it are doing, especially with language. My focus on the performance of identities offers insights that would not have been provided by a more evaluative approach investigating the question of legitimate or illegitimate claims by the organisation, and whether the organisation was doing what it said it was doing. My approach usefully highlights what is important for people to perform in their relationships with others in a variety of contexts, as evidenced in identity work examined at a micro level. The actions of Xorg and its staff relate to the organisation's publicised undertaking of supporting work with children in state care in China in the way that they build up the impact and influence of the organisation. The illustrative data discussed in this chapter show the extent of the work that is done in this regard.

This chapter shows how in Xorg's public representations of its work, Xorg is predominately represented as existing to address the problem that children are not in families. The problem is constructed as a moral issue and there are connotations of 'saving' children. There is a particular persistent suggestion of the best place for children to develop that reifies the 'family'. In representations of how the problem that children are not in families is being addressed, values, such as being loving, are of importance and are attributed to foster families. The way in which Xorg is addressing the problem involves Xorg being depicted variously as giving skills, placing children in families and influencing

government.

Practice is not described in any detail in the public representations of the work that are relevant to this chapter. The complexities of the developing field of social work in China do not feature at all prominently in representations of the problem the organisation exists to address. What is of note is the extent to which the work is depicted as highly unproblematic, given that it is often discussed not in terms of specific discrete tasks but in terms of the development of foster care in China. A number of potentially conflicting ideas appear, particularly in the area of responsible development practice, which could have presented dilemmas. Dilemmas are not acknowledged, however, by the speakers and creators of the texts pertaining to this chapter. Moreover, an advocacy role, which might be expected to be achieved by changing practice through training, often becomes less important than a service-delivery role and the placement of children in families. There is almost a fear of a lack of visibility, possibly leading to the frequent conflation of the development of foster care in China, the end result of placements achieved and Xorg's own work.

The performances of identities in these data work against the contextual picture I suggested in Chapter One. Notably, the performances of successful identities are not rooted in the idea of organisational survival in an incredibly challenging environment doing very difficult work. The organisation is represented as doing much more than mere survival. Similarly, much of the identity work goes beyond justifying the organisation's existence to building up its size and

transformative impact. The kind of identity work evident in the data constructs successful and influential, as well as professional, identities. The scale and scope of Xorg's involvement and its centrality are emphasised; it is even breaking into new territories, which perhaps has imperialist connotations.

Xorg is often positioned as the provider of a strong development programme. It takes control in setting up foster-care programmes, it is very active, and it is leaving a legacy. Xorg even has the funders under its control. Xorg is central to the development of foster care in China. The children need families and are having their lives transformed; the Chinese government is being helped – Xorg has a close relationship with the government; and workers are needing to be trained and are being equipped for the work ahead.

This chapter shows how incredibly important it is for there to be in the public representations of the work an overall consistent message that Xorg is successful and that success involves having a big impact, being at the centre of things, and being able to handle what the context presents. The working up of a strong moral foundation forms the basis for performances of success upon which the representations of Xorg as professional and in control are constructed. The next chapter will consider the construction of expert identities and moral authority in more depth.

Chapter Five: The Production of Expert Identities and Moral Authority

The previous chapter looked at the performance of successful identities through the location of Xorg in child welfare in China and through the particular ways in which the organisation's position was contextualised. My analysis showed that various representations of knowing what to do and of acting on a strong moral foundation were part of the basis for the building up of success. This chapter will look at representations of expert and moral authority and show in more detail how and from what they were constituted.

In line with my approach throughout the thesis, I shall explore how authority is constituted in the data. However I shall begin with my understanding of expert identities and moral authority as related and complementary, with expert authority as the power or influence to convince others of what the situation is and moral authority being the power or influence to convince others of what should be done, especially in a difficult situation.

Conventionally, in common usage, the term 'expert' signifies someone who has special knowledge or skill. Experts can be classified by an area of theoretical expertise (e.g. child welfare), a sector of work (e.g. social work), the level of work (e.g. strategic manager or trainer), institutional context (e.g. NGO), authority of experience (for example, expatriate or local), and nature of experience (in one location or in many locations) (adapted from Wilson 2006 p.

502). Understandings of the expert depend, however, upon understandings of knowledge and learning in the context of international development. The academic literature about knowledge in development is sophisticated, and I shall mention some of the key ideas here in broad terms. Firstly, the idea of a technocratic knowledge elite, in which scientific or administrative technical experts predominate, retains influence. This idea has been heavily criticised. For example, Kothari suggests that:

[...] the development 'expert' acts as an agent in consolidating unilinear notions of modernising progress [...] 'experts' embody the unequal relationship between the 'First' and 'Third' Worlds, and between donors and aid recipients [...] This production of the 'professional' development expert [...] legitimises and authorises their interventions by valorising their particular technical skills and reinforcing classifications of difference between, for example, the 'developed' and 'developing' worlds [...]

(Kothari 2005 p. 9)

Technocratic knowledge contrasts with participatory knowledge, which is created, through joint inquiry, within a community or group of people who often have experience of the issue under investigation. Some understandings of knowledge in development separate Western knowledge and indigenous knowledge, which are constructed as needing mediation (Yarrow 2008). Other approaches emphasise the co-production of knowledge and learning spaces (Wilson 2006).

This chapter will not evaluate whether Xorg is delivering technocratic, participatory or learning-with types of development interventions. I am introducing them because the chapter will examine the kinds of understandings of knowledge and learning that were used, and how they were used, in representations of the work and in the positioning of the different actors

involved. The analysis considers references to universal or generic and to local or contextual knowledge, and the way the development and implementation of project plans were talked about.

As was discussed in Chapter Two, international development has a moral foundation (Tvedt 2006). I am linking this with the moral work done in the construction of identities at the micro level and with sense-making processes around being an actor in international development. The chapter is concerned with how different ideas are used and produced in ways of talking and acting as part of the negotiation of identities and relationships, with a specific focus on expert and moral authority.

Methodologically, I shall continue the approach of the previous chapter. I shall continue my ethnographic account of activity in the organisation, focusing on what is accomplished by action, including talk, and to whom an action may be directed or to whom it may be a response. Where E and the interviewee together created particular accounts of organisational activities and relationships with others, I shall continue to include my own performance in the analysis. As was used and explained in the previous chapter, the analytic concepts I apply when looking at the language in texts are interpretative repertoires and subject positions. I also draw on the ethnographic fieldnotes in my dataset for my analysis, which was discussed in Chapter Three and in the introduction to the previous data chapter, Chapter Four. I shall continue to pay

attention to the function of stories, this time moral stories in short case studies from organisational literature.

The interpretative repertoires I have identified as being significant in the patterns in the data relating to this chapter are as follows. Again I shall use my own words to summarise and name the interpretative repertoires and I shall give in brackets examples of the words and phrases actually used in the texts, which characterise the repertoires. The interpretative repertoires that recur in data relating to this chapter are that *experts evaluate* ('follow up'; 'research and evaluation'); that *some NGOs are unprofessional* ('throw' as in 'throw money' or 'throw children', 'good willed [but]', 'just [e.g. money]'); that *it is better to praise than to criticise* ('encourage', pairings such as 'support–condemn', 'have faith'); that *everyone wants to be in China* ('hunger', 'bandwagon'); that *the knowledge exists as a globally transferable product* ('the' as in 'the skills/information/expertise/learning' and 'the right' as in 'the right information/the right knowledge', 'got' as in 'they've got' or 'we've got'); and that *actions speak louder than words* ('[action and] that's taught them already', 'watch what they do'). I shall also continue to analyse the use of the interpretative repertoires introduced and discussed in the previous chapter.

This chapter will look at the variation in the ways the work of the organisation was constructed, within and between accounts. I shall consider instances when the most dominant interpretative repertoires were not used or were talked against (Billig 1987). I shall contrast more public representations of the work,

discussed in the first part of the chapter, with less public performances, examined in the second part of the chapter. The first part will take as examples extracts from the elite-style and slightly confrontational research interview between E and B, a television interview with B and case studies from an annual report. The second part will take extracts from interviews between E and other staff. Ethnographic fieldnotes are also integrated into the analysis.

Expert and moral authority in E's interview with B

The first few minutes of the interview between E and B covered an overview of foster care in China and Xorg's role.

- 1 E So, can you make any overall statement or assessment about foster care
2 in China?
3
- 4 B Well, I mean, just the fact that it's been a huge development, in the last
5 ten years, if you think, going back to 1998, there was very little foster
6 care, or it was very amateur in the sense of, you know, people taking
7 kids home for the weekend and that sort of stuff, so the whole
8 development of the management structures and professional practice
9 has come on a huge way.
10
- 11 E Yeah. And, to make that kind of statement, are you, like, happy about
12 the information that you get about the management structures, or do
13 you feel confident that you have seen them in operation?
14
- 15 B Absolutely, I mean the most important thing about what we do is, is
16 following up from the training, and so doing the research and
17 evaluation, of which, you know, the majority I've been doing, up until
18 this year, in the last sort of eight years, I've been going to all the projects
19 and seeing the development, and I think a good measurement also is in
20 having the biannual national conference where you can see, you know,
21 the PowerPoint presentations, the actual practice that's in, in place.
22
- 23 E Yeah. But what about the rest of China, 'cause I mean the 30, well it's
24 been 15 and now 30 project sites, so those could quite well be operating,
25 you know, operating at a much higher standard than the rest, that's, I
26 mean that's quite a small number of orphanages in terms of the whole of
27 China, do you have any sense of
28
- 29 B Well, I mean, I, the general picture is, is a rollout and I think one has to
30 have faith and, and support in, in the Chinese government, I mean this

- 31 ultimately is their project, they're running it, and so I think our projects
32 are only a reflection of the other projects.
33
34 E Right
35
36 B Of course there are always going to be, there are always going to be
37 those that have excellent professional standards, and those that have
38 poor professional standards, that's the same in any country, but my
39 kind of feeling is that it's more important to encourage, and support and
40 empower those that, that, that need the support rather than to isolate
41 and condemn them.

(Extract 5a, from interview between E and B)

The way in which my presence in the organisation had been set up, which I discussed in Chapter One, positioned Xorg, and especially B, as the experts. Members of staff at Xorg seemed to understand my position there as comparable with previous 'internships' and my mission as being to learn in connection with my studies. E's first question in this extract asks B to assess foster care in China (lines 1–2). B refers to 1998, which was the year he started working in China, and makes a contrast between the 'amateur' (line 6) situation then, and the more 'professional' (line 8) practice now. As the conversation continues after E's next question, foster care in China and 'what we do' (line 15) start to become the same and so Xorg is positioned as professional as it is implied that Xorg has contributed to the transition from amateur to professional practice. B's statement also draws on the interpretative repertoire from the previous chapter *foster care in China is taking off*, which supports the location of Xorg in an important development.

My fieldnotes show the difficulty I had in finding out what the organisation was doing and this led me, despite my methodology, at times to employ less of an exploratory and receptive approach to data generation and more of a

probing and fact-finding plan of attack, which requested a performance of proficiency from others. Standing back to analyse the performance of E in this interview, it becomes clear that E's style is demanding and challenging. E's performance is of an interviewer seeking lucidity; although she asks open questions facilitating discursive exploration by B, at the same time she indicates concern with 'facts' and the grounds on which statements are made.

In this particular extract, E follows up some of B's statements, for example about management structures in foster-care programmes, by asking him whether he is happy with the information he has on which to base the statements (lines 11–13). Later, she also refers specifically to Xorg's fifteen (line 25) project sites and challenges B on the generalisation that can be made from them.

B and E draw on the interpretative repertoire that I have called *experts evaluate*. B uses this way of talking to shape his own personal identity in this situation. He communicates that he is an eyewitness to the positive change. He is set up as the expert here partly through the depiction of how he has been checking developments personally, by seeing for himself what has been happening. He refers to what 'I've been doing' (line 17) and where 'I've been going' (line 18). This is done, of course, in response to E's question about whether he has seen enough to justify his previous statement. Both E and B talk as if B's own observations and assessment would be evidence for developments. B provides a reassuring answer. In this reassurance, B also references material objects by

representing the PowerPoint presentations as evidence of 'actual practice' (line 21).

After E's question about the relationship between Xorg's project sites and the rest of China (lines 24–8), B hands responsibility for developments in foster care back to the Chinese government. There is perhaps some use made of an interpretative repertoire introduced in Chapter Four, *good development projects can be scaled up or replicated*, when B refers to a 'rollout' (line 30). There is some acknowledgement, however, that standards may not be so good everywhere, and this is resolved by drawing on the interpretative repertoire *it is better to praise than to criticise*. B uses an extreme version of this interpretative repertoire, saying that it is better to support rather than 'isolate and condemn' (lines 41–2). This generates some moral authority for B and Xorg and silences E. It could also be a reference to, and distinction from, the wider idea of 'China bashers' whose obsession with human-rights abuses in China is often criticised as counterproductive. B specifically states that it is necessary to 'have faith' in the Chinese government (line 31). When B refers to not isolating and condemning those who 'need the support' (line 41), he is also positioning Xorg as more constructive than others, perhaps people such as the producers of the television documentaries discussed in Chapter One, which portrayed workers and the government in an extremely negative way. My fieldnotes show frequent reference by international actors in Xorg and other INGOs to those programmes and their confrontational nature, given the (albeit stereotypical) idea of the importance of 'face' in Chinese culture, as a way of explaining why there were

difficulties in gaining access for outsiders wanting to work in child welfare in China. Notably, there was infrequent reference to any problems generated by the political and social policy system in China as an alternative explanation for access difficulties.

The interview between E and B has tones of an 'elite interview' with an 'expert' (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). The extract below is typical of long passages of this interview, in which E asked short questions and received long responses. E is very much the audience, along with wider audiences of unseen others to whom the talk also speaks, and E is largely a listener or spectator of B's performance. A few minutes into the interview, E asks, 'So in terms of the practical foster care then, what sort of things have helped and what sort of things have hindered, say the development of foster care or the development of your work'. B begins to answer this question in terms of 'a whole new level of people working in social welfare in China so there's new, there's new thoughts, new brains, new ideas, young people' but then the interview is interrupted by a telephone call. After the call, the conversation continues as follows:

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1 | E | The helping and hindering factors and you were talking about the new |
| 2 | | people in government. |
| 3 | | |
| 4 | B | Yeah, so I, yeah, in a sense, working with the [Ministry of] Civil Affairs, |
| 5 | | working with the Chinese government, has been a very positive factor, I |
| 6 | | think some of the harder ones have been actually other international |
| 7 | | organisations and that may be where, you know, you refer to other |
| 8 | | organisations coming in and, and there is almost like a hunger to work |
| 9 | | in China but where do I fit in, so they see something successful, which |
| 10 | | Xorg has been involved in, so let's jump on the bandwagon, that's easy |
| 11 | | enough, you know, let's throw children into families, and of course we |
| 12 | | all know that that's quite a delicate, you know, intricate piece of work |
| 13 | | that has to happen, and it has to be done by people who know what |
| 14 | | they are doing, so, you know, if you get some people, good-willed |
| 15 | | people, coming in and starting foster care without the professional |

16 standards, the minimum standards, and the training, and having people
17 trained in that area, then, then of course there'll be lots of breakdowns,
18 and then it'll give, give the whole level of care a bad name, so I think
19 that's always been our, our, our sort of anxiety, is that, you know, often,
20 people will work with organisations because they are throwing money
21 into a situation, and that doesn't always help the situation, what you
22 need is, is, is the professional practice to be able to move forward, and I
23 think China has, China is developing away from that now, because it
24 has good financial services. What it doesn't have is, is being closed off
25 fifty years to the expertise and skills and I think that probably is where
26 Xorg has found its kind of niche because, you know, what I've been
27 trying to do with the team, is train them around the, the learning, you
28 know, the research and the, the examples of learning from, from, from
29 all of the mistakes we made in the UK, so I think in a sense that could
30 help China move forward much quicker, you know, what took us ten
31 years through research and development they could do in, you know,
32 five because they've got that information, you know, about all the
33 mistakes that we made.

(Extract 5b, from interview between E and B)

B starts by saying that working with the Ministry of 'Civil Affairs' (line 4), which he clarifies as working with the Chinese government, has been 'very positive' (line 5). Xorg is aligned with the Chinese government. This draws on an interpretative repertoire from the previous chapter: *good development projects are conducted with local partners*. In this case the Chinese government are the local partners. The idea of partnership has had a powerful rhetorical function in the development industry, despite difficulties institutions have had in being responsive in partnerships (Brinkerhoff 2002). B is also speaking to a wider audience who may be aware of the limitations on work by INGOs in China, despite the opportunities provided by the past two decades (Ma 2006). While he is initially a little non-committal about the positivity by saying 'in a sense' (line 4), he actually turns the dominant picture on its head by saying that working with the Chinese government has been more positive than being in a situation with 'other organisations coming in' (lines 7–8), which has been 'harder' (line 6). This is a surprising twist on familiar ideas, and it echoes some of the wider

criticism and disparagement of supposedly amateur NGOs staffed by well-intentioned people doing humanitarian work in a naïve and idealistic way. It draws on the interpretative repertoire *some NGOs are unprofessional*. B attributes the idea of 'other organisations coming in' (lines 7–8) to E, which is a reference to a previous moment in the interview when E had asked about where B saw Xorg sitting in relation to other foreign organisations, the degree of difference between Xorg and the others, and B's perspective on the contribution of foreign organisations as a whole. B draws on the interpretative repertoire *everyone wants to be in China* and says that the other organisations are desperate to join in, that there is 'hunger' (line 8) to work in China. This resonates with the situation in many industries in which organisations are attracted by the rise of China and the billion-dollar market – but in the depiction above B suggests that they are a little bit lost, asking 'where do I fit in?' (line 9); they are coming into a situation in which Xorg is already established and has been doing something 'successful' (lines 8–9).

B positions Xorg as different to those other organisations who want to 'jump on the bandwagon' and 'throw children into families' (lines 10–11). It is 'easy enough' (line 10) to jump on that bandwagon, in contrast to the 'delicate' and 'intricate' (line 12) work that Xorg has been doing. There is an implication that Xorg has not only the knowledge, but also the discretion or sensitivity, to do the work. Moreover, B brings together the people he is aligning himself with, saying that 'we all know' (line 11) that foster care 'has to be done by people who know what they are doing' (line 13). So not only does Xorg have the

knowledge about foster care itself, and the ability to do this work, which is not easy, but it is also on the right side of this moral principle, as of course Xorg is a group of people who know what they are doing. There is perhaps some wisdom implied here, or responsibility, and an ability to take an ethical stance towards what is required – with perhaps an implication that if they weren't people who knew what they were doing, they wouldn't be doing it. B is building up the moral stance of the organisation, along with a representation of its expertise.

B draws further on the interpretative repertoire *some NGOs are unprofessional* and on ideas about 'good-willed' (line 14) people in contrast to 'professional' ways of working (lines 15–16). He says that without organisations using professional standards and trained personnel, breakdowns will occur and the 'whole level of care' (line 17) will be given a 'bad name' (line 18). B talks about what is a source of anxiety for Xorg. B says that Xorg has been anxious that 'people will work with organisations because they are throwing money into a situation' (line 20), another expression from the interpretative repertoire *some NGOs are unprofessional*. This time, 'professional practice' (lines 21–2) is contrasted with money. Xorg is positioned not only in contrast to unprofessional people and organisations, but also in contrast to development organisations that offer finance primarily. This performance does not make reference to Xorg's provision of finance to foster-care programmes, nor to the ways in which Xorg's own staff could be, or actually not be considered to be,

trained personnel, given the minimal number of trained social workers among them. Uncomplicated contrasts function to justify Xorg's position.

I am arguing that a variety of discursive moves work to produce expert identities and moral authority. So far in the extracts in this chapter, the authority of Xorg and of B as an individual have been built up in the talk by both aligning the development of foster care in China with what Xorg does and handing responsibility for the development of foster care back to the Chinese government; by both establishing an expert identity as an eyewitness who can critically judge and elevating praise above criticism; and by positioning other organisations against Xorg, which is depicted to be more constructive than other organisations, to be already established doing the work, and to have the knowledge and sensitivity required.

I am also arguing that this identity work is context driven, in this case, in Extract 5b, by the confrontational nature of the interview between E and B. B works very hard to establish authority. Extract 5b also shows particular ways of talking about knowledge. B says that 'China is developing away from that now' (lines 22–3), away from organisations that come in, 'throwing money into a situation' (line 20); China is doing the right thing here, and is presented as aligned with Xorg in resisting an ineffective or inadequate type of international development. There is use of an interpretative repertoire visible in the data discussed in the previous chapter: *development is about giving people skills*.

However, China also has lacks; it has some kind of deficit from 'being closed off

fifty years to the expertise and skills' (lines 24–5). This draws on the interpretative repertoire I have summarised as *the knowledge exists as a globally transferable product*: Xorg is the sort of organisation China wants, and Xorg has found its 'niche' (line 25) in the area of expertise and skills. Here B does some individual identity work. B says that he has been trying to train the team about the 'learning', the 'research', and the 'mistakes we made in the UK' (lines 27–9). All that has gone before feeds into the construction of B's own individual identity as a holder and conveyor of the knowledge.

B says that China can learn from the mistakes made in the UK. He says 'what took us ten years through research and development they could do in [...] five because they've got that information [...] about all the mistakes that we made' (lines 30–2). Issues around the idea of transferability of knowledge and skills from the UK to China, and around knowledge creation and the process of learning, are not mentioned here in this particular discussion, which is creating something more certain. Personal-identity work continues as B refers to an 'us' (line 30) in the UK, aligning himself with groundbreakers there.

Overall, Extract 5b is illustrative of the entanglement, in my data, of moral authority and authority based on expertise, and of how those were used in the building of organisational and individual professional identities. B draws on interpretative repertoires that articulate some common ideas in relation to development. Some are used to create Xorg's distance from negative approaches to international development, specifically organisations 'throwing

money' (line 20) at a situation, and these ways of talking resonate with common criticisms of some international-development work. However B also constructs a positive identity for the organisation by drawing upon interpretative repertoires that, when consciously identified and examined as interpretative repertoires in my analysis, are ways of talking that resonate with controversial and perhaps outdated ideas in the international-development arena (Escobar 2005). Examples are the expression of the idea of the global transferability of knowledge and skills and a conceptualisation of social change that implies one way forward.

A picture is created of the right people with the right knowledge. B implies that this is Xorg's product. There are many challenges to working in this field, but the answer to those is 'expertise and skills' (lines 24–5), 'information' (line 32), and 'learning' (line 28) from mistakes made in the UK. There are good and bad things that come from the international-development community, and Xorg is a good thing. A dramatic, and perhaps bleak, representation of the situation contrasts morally reprehensible organisations which 'throw children into families' (line 11), on the one hand, with people who know what they are doing, on the other. It is a pivotal situation as the dangers are considerable – specifically the 'whole' (line 17) level of care may get a bad name. This is perhaps a reference to a wider concern that the Chinese authorities remain to be convinced about the benefits of foster care and are yet to put their support wholeheartedly behind its development. Xorg is fighting against the potential catastrophe that could occur if the authorities are put off developing this kind

of care because of the actions of other, irresponsible, development organisations. The difficulties and complexities of the work, and any self-reflection on what specifically the Xorg staff team offer, are omitted here. B's response is at a macro level and is not about the subtleties of care provision. Overall, E's question about the context and what has helped and hindered the work is answered in a very particular way. Ultimately, this moment of interaction between E and B generates a discussion – about good development and bad development – that justifies Xorg's position in this arena. Yet good development is described in ways that draw on interpretative repertoires around global knowledge and the giving of skills that could be seen by other actors in the international-development arena as outdated discursive resources, given the availability of other ways of talking that challenge those familiar interpretative repertoires and are more nuanced in terms of what good development and bad development are (Edelman and Haugerud 2005).

The performance of authoritative action on TV

The following extract is from a television programme on CCTV9, which was broadcast during my fieldwork period and in which the director of Xorg was being interviewed about provision for children affected by the Sichuan earthquake – which occurred three months into my fieldwork. CCTV9 is a state television channel broadcast in English, which is widely thought to perform a public-relations function for the Chinese government and to be directed at foreigners in China and around the world. This extract is a different kind of construction of data to the interview extracts presented earlier, in that I have

selected the extract below but I had no part in the production of the TV programme.

- 1 Presenter However, after all, the rescue people would withdraw, after all,
2 the professional psychiatrists will not stay there all their life.
3 With the withdrawal of these professionals what's going to
4 happen?
5
6 B Well what we've done, [presenter's name], is to send a team of
7 counsellors. In fact, yesterday, we've just got a trauma
8 psychologist, qualified, and we've brought him, we're sending
9 him from Beijing down to Chengdu with a Chinese counselling
10 team. The aim is not to do the counselling, the aim is to train local
11 people in Chengdu, and as we speak one of those workshops is
12 going on today, and will be going on Saturday, Sunday, Monday,
13 Tuesday. So we can get the experts down there with the right
14 information, with the right knowledge of how to go through the
15 processes and train the local people. And I think you know a little
16 bit about Xorg, that's the way we've worked over the years. We
17 want to support and encourage and train, so we can empower
18 people to change people's lives and, and, and affect children's
19 lives. And so we feel the best way is if we can get on the ground,
20 we can train hundreds, maybe thousands of people, then the, the
21 local Chengdu, Sichuan, people will be able to take those
22 messages back to the, the children.

(Extract 5c, from my transcription of TV programme)

This account of Xorg's activity draws upon one particular conception of knowledge most heavily, which affords the possibility of the transfer of knowledge about the care of vulnerable children. It uses the interpretative repertoire *the knowledge exists as a globally transferable product*. B talks about having the right people, the 'experts' (line 13), with the 'right information' and the 'right knowledge' (lines 13–14). This will 'empower' (line 17) people 'to change people's lives' (line 18). Knowledge is represented as a product that can be given out. In this work to construct an expert identity, the detail of what happens in the global movement of ideas is silenced. One study of an Italian childhood-education programme implemented in a Chinese child-welfare institution uses Said's framework for how theory travels across boundaries to

document how the 'spatial and conceptual distance traversed' modified the original ideas and how 'the accommodated ideas are transformed by their new uses and application in a new time and place' (Nyland and Nyland 2005 p. 283). Perhaps unsurprisingly but still of significance for the reproduction of knowledge about how to change care provision, there is no room for these nuances in B's performance of his own and Xorg's authority on national television.

This section of the television interview begins with some confusion before B works at establishing that Xorg has the right and relevant knowledge. The presenter asks what is going to happen in the earthquake zone when the rescue workers, specifically the psychiatrists, have gone home. B confidently asserts 'what we've done' (line 6). He also creates some intimacy with the presenter by the use of his name. The use of the past tense in the phrase 'what we've done' indicates not only action, but also completed action. This is powerful, although it is then followed by some confusion of tenses. B says it was 'yesterday' (line 7) that the qualified psychologist was brought on board and then says 'we're sending him' (lines 8–9), which would seem to imply he may not have gone yet.

B says that Xorg is sending 'a team of counsellors' (lines 6–7). B says that Xorg has found a psychologist, and adds that he is 'qualified' (line 8), implying that what Xorg is doing is professional. B mentions a team again, but this time says it is a 'Chinese counselling team' (lines 9–10), which perhaps creates a sense of culturally appropriate action and implies that the team has the necessary

cultural perspective. It makes a difference that the team is 'Chinese' (line 9). Interestingly then, this account draws on ideas about both global knowledge and culturally specific or relative knowledge. Awareness of local knowledge and local context is demonstrated here. Research suggests that in development work different knowledges are valued, but that they may not be seen as equally important (Johnson and Wilson 2006). In this case, the mention of the Chinese counselling team perhaps refers to contextual knowledge, but the other expert remains positioned as dominant, with the notion that the team will go with him. From my ethnographic observations, I understood that three psychologists, sent by Xorg, spent a few days in Chengdu and that they were ethnically Chinese, Cantonese speakers from Hong Kong or non-Chinese. My point here is not to underestimate the difficulty or to overestimate the desirability of finding Mandarin-speaking, trained, trauma therapists from China, and not to undermine the useful contribution that outsiders no doubt made in the disaster situation, despite the difficulties social work as a profession encountered in the post-disaster efforts (Bian, Wei et al. 2009). Rather, I am interested in how ways of talking position Xorg and B himself as 'expert'.

B says that the workshops are already happening as he speaks. One is happening 'today' (line 12). B explains that Xorg's team will not be counselling directly, but will be training others to do that. Some moral authority is claimed here in the way of broader international-development discourse and ideas about replicability. The two interpretative repertoires *development is about giving people skills* and *good development projects can be scaled up and replicated* can be

seen in use here. What B is describing sounds like an excellent model and a sustainable and effective way of working. In addition, B gives weight and urgency to the activity of counselling and to the idea of doing it professionally. B indicates that the methods he is outlining – outside experts training local people – are tried and tested, as he says that this is the way Xorg has worked ‘over the years’ (line 16).

My participant observation during the period after the earthquake led me to understand that the Chinese counselling team consisted of members of Xorg staff, none of whom were trained counsellors, although some of their backgrounds prior to joining Xorg did include working in child welfare institutions and teaching. I recorded in my fieldnotes my feelings of alarm around what I saw as the dangers of unqualified people providing a form of therapy. The discussion in the office gave me the impression that the staff would be providing counselling to individuals directly and not just training others to do so. I was concerned that their position as trainers from Xorg (and some were administrative staff, not trainers) gave them a certain status and authority, which could be misleading. Feeling strongly about the distinction between counselling and a lay person offering support and comfort to another person in a crisis situation, I set myself the task of finding and circulating information in Chinese about counselling people with post-traumatic stress disorder, which is what had come up as a topic of conversation in the office. I found an information leaflet and gave it to those members of Xorg staff who

were about to embark on a trip to the earthquake area to provide what was being referred to in the office as 'trauma counselling'.

My finding and circulating of this information also arose from my attempts to find something that I could usefully do at a chaotic but potentially critical time, and also from my concern for the members of staff who had themselves expressed a lack of confidence and considerable apprehension about the task that was before them. The information appeared to be very gratefully received, in that it was circulated multiple times and I received much thanks. On reflection, however, I now see the work of setting out to provide this counselling training as far more important for the performance of success discussed in Chapter Four and the production of authority that is the subject of this chapter. Although disaster response and therapeutic work had not up to this point been part of Xorg's mission or agenda, Xorg worked hard to locate itself within the humanitarian disaster response – by NGOs and government authorities – to the earthquake. This effort by Xorg was part of building its identity as a player in development in China by contextualising its work through links to significant events. Extract 5c paints a particular image of what the organisation does, which is quite different to other accounts of its work. In Extract 5c, Xorg is an organisation experienced in training local people and has within its repertoire counselling and trauma psychology.

Towards the end of Extract 5c, the talk draws upon several ideas that appear to relate to broader development work and are not necessarily earthquake specific.

B is perhaps addressing potential supporters when he says that Xorg can 'empower' (line 17) people and 'change people's lives' (line 18), specifically 'affect children's lives' (lines 18–19), with empowerment being a key concept, albeit an ideologically constructed buzzword or 'fuzz-word' (Cornwall and Brock 2005 p. 1056) in development discourse. The way the paragraph ends is interesting in that B somewhat tenuously brings the talk back to children (line 22). Perhaps B was nervous on the show, and it is possible that in this part he attempts to bring the talk back to children but is uncertain of how to do it. He also talks about substantial numbers, saying that 'the best way' (line 19) is to 'get on the ground' (line 19) and train 'hundreds, maybe thousands of people' (line 20).

Overall, the presenter's question about what is going to happen after the initial emergency response is the stimulus for the construction of an active identity for Xorg. Xorg is presented as taking action, facilitating developments and – with its access to resources, especially personnel – moving people into place. B refers to 'experts' who have 'the right information' and 'the right knowledge' (lines 13-14), and draws on ideas about empowerment and transformation in the sense of the numbers of people to benefit and lives to be changed. B claims some moral authority for Xorg, which is already working in a sustainable way and therefore provides a model for a solution to the problem that the presenter raises about the future.

More generally in Xorg, apart from in connection to the earthquake, and in addition to the representation of moral development practices, moral authority was built upon particular constructions of the child-welfare problem that Xorg existed to solve. In the next section I shall turn more to the production of moral authority.

The moral work done by organisational literature

As was discussed in Chapter Four, maintaining the 'children in families' vision was integral to representations of the success of the organisation. Xorg placed particular emphasis on one key message about foster care: that children do better in families than in institutions. Below – in Extracts 5d (a) to 5d (d) – are four case studies from the most recently published annual report at the beginning of my time with the organisation. The case studies are in short-story format. These stories have a different quality to the epic stories discussed in Chapter Four.

1 Special love

2
3 If a child does not have the special love and attention only parents can provide,
4 then that child might not develop to his or her full potential and sometimes
5 with quite serious consequences.

6
7 For the first 5 years of his life in an orphanage, Shao Qiang was presumed deaf
8 and dumb. However, within a year of living with his new family Shao Qiang
9 was able to read a poem on stage to an audience of 100s.

10
11 Shao Qiang had never been deaf dumb, he had simply lacked the stimulation
12 and nurture needed to develop his communication skills.

(Extract 5d (a), from recent annual report)

This short story is set up by a statement that sounds like a piece of information, but which draws on an interpretative repertoire discussed in Chapter Four: *every child needs a family*. It draws on the existing commonsense knowledge

which the *every child needs a family* interpretative repertoire articulates, and which the writer and reader share, about the benefits of family life for the developing child. Given how that way of talking expresses the ideas as uncontroversial, the first sentence is creating a consensus for the receipt of the forthcoming story (lines 3–5).

The story itself is very short – three lines long (lines 7–9). The first important element is time. The five years contrast with the later reference to ‘within a year’ (line 8), that is less than even one year. The other main contrast is, of course, between the orphanage and the ‘new family’ (line 8). The orphanage is an entity, the individuals within it hidden, and it lacks agency. The child was there for five years and the lack of stimulation was such that he was ‘presumed deaf and dumb’ (lines 7–8). The foster parents, however, are able to make such a difference that the child makes rapid progress; although the story does not delineate the actions of the parents so much as suggest that the sheer presence of the child in the family environment is the key. Foster parents are ‘his new family’ (line 8), with the permanence that expression implies. A final important element in the story appears to be the ‘audience’ (line 9), which is of significant size and able to validate the transformation. The story is highly critical of orphanage care.

The final paragraph (lines 11–12) is an evaluation. The initial statement (lines 3–5) focuses on the general problem of the child’s achieving his ‘potential’ (line 4), which requires the ‘special love and attention only parents can provide’ (line 3).

At the end, however, the focus is narrowed down to the specific example of communication skills, which require stimulation and nurture. This final paragraph provides the ultimate contrast in this dramatic story: an unspoken contrast between Shao Qiang's move into the interactive world and the bleaker future he might have had and from which he escaped, but which others are still facing.

The brevity of the story in Extract 5d (a) begs the question of what might not have been included, and why. As was stated above, these short stories appear in one of the organisation's annual reports. There is no detail on how the organisation's core work – training – relates to the story of Shao Qiang or on how the story fits into the context of China's developing social-work system and foster-care programmes. Rather, the focus – even in this material from an annual report primarily for supporters outside China – is on the key message around the benefits of family care over institutional life. Still, even with the focus on this key message about the benefits of family care, the story is surprisingly short. The text does not include any information about what it is about family care that has benefited Shao Qiang, nor any about the ways in which specific aspects of the foster-care arrangement have worked. The other possibilities for inclusion in this story appear to have been silenced by the concern with a simple, key, undisputable message emphasising the greater benefits of family in comparison to those of an orphanage. The lack of detail engendered by the superficial nature of the story enhances the self-evident nature of the message and the soundness of the knowledge that Xorg is using

about where a child should grow up, as well as the moral case for work, such as Xorg's, promoting foster care.

- 1 Why not adoption?
2
3 After being a Foster Mum to this girl for 2 years, Xorg asked the mother in this
4 picture if she had ever considered adopting her daughter, who was clearly
5 delighted with her new parents.
6
7 She replied by saying: 'Every morning when I wake up I think about adopting
8 her! But she requires very special medical attention, and I simply can't afford it.
9 Maybe in the future but we treat her as our own anyway!'
10
11 Foster Care in China is actively supported and encouraged by the Chinese
12 Government. Medical and Educational costs for the foster children are fully
13 covered. This makes it possible for ALL children to receive family care!
(Extract 5d (b), from recent annual report)

This short story is entitled 'Why not adoption?' The first point of note is that the question is answered by asking a foster carer (line 3), rather than drawing on any policy or practice context, theory or regulations. At the same time, the grounds for the initial concern raised by the question are undercut by the reference to 'her daughter' and use of the phrase 'adopting her daughter' (line 4). The use of the possessive gives a secure feeling. This is already a family, the child has 'her new parents', not foster carers (line 5), and the permanency is already there. Asking the question to a foster carer invites the succeeding focus on money. It becomes a story about money. The mother cannot afford to adopt the child because she can't afford the medical care the child needs. The woman's morally good identity is built up by the phrase 'we treat her as our own anyway' (line 9).

I am arguing that moral authority is produced by a succession of discursive moves that persuade us of what should be done – the support and perhaps

expansion of the foster-care programme with which Xorg is involved. Although this is not explicitly stated, in Extract 5d (b) above, the foster carer's attitude is moral, the government is doing the right thing, and Xorg is by implication involved with this work, which carries moral weight.

The final paragraph draws on the interpretative repertoire *foster care in China is taking off*. It sounds very positive about the Chinese government's attitude to foster care in general and specifically its financial support for foster children. The question of adoption doesn't seem to matter any more; by the end it is almost neither here nor there. There is a grand statement that 'ALL' (line 13) children can receive family care anyway. The story appears to make the point that foster care is just as good as, even pretty much the same as, adoptive care.

Missing from this paragraph is any discussion of the differences between foster care and adoption, the impacts on placement stability of different models of care, the 'realities' of foster placements, and the movements of children between placements. Similarly, there is no discussion of the ways in which the Chinese government funds medical and educational care for vulnerable children, nor any acknowledgement of other possibilities, such as providing financial assistance for adoptive families that require it.

The story positions Xorg as working in an area that receives support from the Chinese government, and in which things are going well, with good foster carers in place. Xorg gains some authority from being positioned as involved in

this. Xorg's moral authority is constituted partly from the idea of providing children not with foster care as a reader familiar with provision for children in state care in the UK, for example, might expect, but with, instead, a permanent arrangement – a new family. This is connected to Xorg's 'children in families' vision.

- 1 The miracle of love
2
3 This story is not about a child, but about a Mum and her family!
4
5 This Mother's son had grown up, gone to university and had left home, leaving
6 her with an empty home and too much time on her hands. She filled her day up
7 with playing Mah-Jong and drinking tea.
8
9 She had always dreamt of caring for a daughter. 'Good news!' we said, 'there
10 are plenty in the orphanage'.
11
12 Her life has new meaning, and she now spends her days doting on her new
13 daughter. 'It's our privilege' she remarks, 'my family has been transformed'!
- (Extract 5d (c), from recent annual report)

On first reading, this is a happy story about fostering, which tells of how foster care can bring happiness to the carers and not just to the child. The title of the story draws on an interpretative repertoire mentioned in the previous chapter: *love is transformative* – in this case there is a reference to the 'miracle of love' (line 1). This story begins with a morally problematic situation in which the mother is spending her days playing Mah-Jong (line 7), a game that sometimes has negative connotations associated with gambling or the amount of time taken up by an addictive leisure pursuit. The reader is led to believe that the mother is essentially a good character, because her son is at university (line 5). This is possibly more of a Chinese marker of good character than a Euro-North American marker of who would be a good foster carer. There are some negative connotations around 'an empty home' (line 6), which again may be more

stereotypically culturally Chinese than Euro-North American, even though this is in the English version of the annual report. Although we are told that this story is not about the child, in effect the child is the, albeit passive, saviour in that she provides the solution to the problem of the empty home and also does no less than give the woman's life meaning. The story resolves with the mother 'doting' (line 12) on the child, rather than playing Mah-Jong.

The demand–supply framework sometimes applied to placements in foster care, but more commonly to the adoption 'market', is evoked in this story and it is the woman's situation that is of significance in making the placement happen. Also of interest is the happy ending, which, through use of the word 'doting' (line 12), keeps the story within the affective realm, with strong feel-good factors. Use of the interpretative repertoire *love is transformative* can be seen again. The story does not stray into the realm of social policy, social-work practice or foster-care training. On the one hand, it reads like a publicity story, to be used in the Chinese context, for recruiting foster parents. A closer reading goes beyond the happiness-all-round, 'miracle' (line 1) story and raises concerns about what really is going on under the surface and whose needs are paramount. How it came to be included in the annual report and who thought it was for what purpose, and the degree of attention paid to the particular audience while the case studies for the report were compiled, are, however, unknown, as is the case with all these extracts. Like the other case studies, however, Extract 5d (c) builds up the moral foundation for Xorg's work, which is presented as having wider benefits beyond the care provided for the child.

Again, the message is constructed as proven and undeniable, and this supports the representation of Xorg as knowing what it is doing. Although it is mostly moral authority that is being built here, Xorg is represented as knowing what needs to be done and how it will benefit everyone.

- 1 Butterfly
2
3 'New life' is at the heart of the foster care projects in China, and this was
4 wonderfully pictured in the words of 6 year old girl [sic] in Shanghai.
5
6 After growing up in an orphanage, and then being placed into her new family,
7 she described the experience in the following way:
8
9 'Before I lived in the orphanage, I felt like a caterpillar. Now that I have my
10 own family, I feel like a butterfly!'
(Extract 5d (d), from recent annual report)

This story has resonance with Extract 5d (a) ('Special Love') above. A clear separation is made between 'before' and 'now', between the 'orphanage' and the new 'own family' (lines 9–10). The eloquent six-year-old also contrasts the immature caterpillar, which will undergo metamorphosis, with the typically colourful, winged butterfly. That which is 'new' seems very important in this extract. At the beginning the text speaks authoritatively about the foster-care projects in China (all of them or just Xorg's – this is possibly deliberately ambiguous) and states that 'new life' is at the heart of them (line 3).

The text does not offer the reader more complex information around the resilience of children in care, the complexities of life, the interwoven nature of different periods of a person's life or the notion of the good in the bad and the bad in the good. These details are omitted. The basic message is again the justification of foster care and the benefits of foster care over institutional care.

Again, it is not clear how this case study came to be included in the annual report. Nevertheless, it is in the annual report, and it serves to highlight the moral case for the work Xorg is involved in.

The four case studies in Extracts 5d (a) to 5d (d) are representations of children and their care in the annual report document from which the extracts are taken. In the first case, the foster parents are the child's 'new family' with transformational results; the second case tells us that foster care is effectively equal to adoptive care; the third tells of the benefits to the foster parents; and the fourth reiterates the message of the first in the stark contrasts it presents between orphanage life and family life. The first and last case studies are particularly vivid representations of the lives of children in state care in China. The children are passive and helpless in the institutions, and any resources, capabilities or even personal interests they may have developed, which would give a sense of the individual person, are given no space in these stories. This omission resonates with research on advertising campaigns by a children's charity, which argues that oversimplification in such materials denies children's lived experiences and how they are active in making sense of their lives (O'Dell 2007). In the moral case studies above it is entirely as a result of family foster care that the children blossom. A moral case is made for foster care, with foster care being positive and orphanage care being negative, and with foster care having other moral benefits and advantages. Authority also comes from the suggestion that Xorg knows what needs to be achieved and provides it.

The annual report is primarily for funders and supporters, many of whom are based in the UK or USA. Xorg has Boards of Trustees in the UK, the USA and Hong Kong. The first story – Extract 5d (a) – was also used in an A5 publicity brochure, *Corporate Opportunities*, which aimed to attract corporate partners. However, these stories partly read like stories for an audience unfamiliar with foster care, perhaps for the staff in some particular institutions in China who have yet to familiarise themselves with that form of care (such as the first story about the child who was ‘deaf and dumb’) or as a recruitment tool for potential foster carers (such as the second and third stories, which give reassuring information about the financial aspects and the benefits for the foster mother). This English text also addresses other audiences in child welfare in China. Possibly, the authors were members of Xorg staff for whom foster care was a new idea. There is perhaps also some similarity with the photographs of foster families in Xorg’s offices, as was mentioned in Chapter Four, in that the representations may be of what is thought to be attractive in some way, rather than of the work of training staff in child-welfare institutions.

In these short stories, the simplicity of the messages, about the benefits of foster care over institutional care and about the way foster care works, serves to reproduce categorical information that supports the ‘children in families’ vision and is part of the interpretative repertoire *every child needs a family*. The annual report has a publicity function; however the representations of children and foster care go beyond advertising the work of the organisation and are part of sustaining the organisation’s vision and producing its authority.

There is a highly moral tone to these particular case studies, which have elements of a moral crusade. The distinctive features of a moral crusade can include: 'framing a condition as an unqualified evil; [...] zealotry among leaders who see their mission as a righteous enterprise; presentation of claims as universalistic truths; use of horror stories as representative of actors' experiences' (Weitzer 2007 p. 467). In the case studies above, orphanages are intrinsically harmful. The material is extremely strong in its conviction that foster care is better than residential care, and this conviction is presented as a universal truth. There are no 'horror' stories as such, but there are stories of potential distress, such as of the child who may have remained 'deaf and dumb' were it not for foster care. In this construction of the problem there is no acknowledgement of grey areas, which could include the advantages and disadvantages of foster care and of residential care for different children. There is little reference to root causes or structural factors affecting the availability of forms of care –these are overshadowed by the dominant moral discourse. Some of the claims, such as that about the government spending that has made it possible for all children to receive family care, are highly simplistic.

The omission of complexities and lack of depth make the messages about foster care seem unquestionable. The material conveys the transformational aspirations of the organisation's activities without workable detail about how those may be achieved in practice. The knowledge about foster care being a good idea is like a product waiting to be distributed or disseminated, and that

Xorg has the capacity to take it forward is implied but not elucidated. The annual reports I saw did not contain case studies of the training of workers. Case studies such as those discussed above construct the child-welfare problem that Xorg exists to address as uncomplicated, and authority is asserted through the presentation of the knowledge and moral foundation underlying Xorg's work. This simplicity involves considerable silence on other matters such as training practices.

Identities, authority and uncertainty in interviews between E and Xorg staff

The discussion so far in this chapter has shown how expert identities and moral authority were constituted from relatively simple, definitive representations of Xorg's concerns, activities and issues pertaining to the work. The talk in interviews between E and a broader spectrum of Xorg staff generated a more indeterminate and somewhat insecure picture of the organisation's work. The remaining part of this chapter will discuss how expert and moral authority were produced alongside representations of uncertainty. It will also highlight how the same things were represented in different ways. In the following extract M tells E about some of the difficulties the work presents. E asks M what was involved in the trips to institutions he had been on in the past year, and, as part of his response, M explains the high level of disability, saying:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | M | We're kind of branching out and thinking well, if we are going to do |
| 2 | | fostering well, then we need to teach those foster families how to do |
| 3 | | rehab [physiotherapy], so we visited some orphanages just to see what |
| 4 | | level, 'cause it's really hard to know what level, 'cause we have some |
| 5 | | training from England obviously and some experience from there, but |
| 6 | | how the heck do you know, all these people in China who, they've been |
| 7 | | doing this for twenty years, some of these ladies, doing rehab, and men |

8 as well, every day, to hundreds of kids, but how much do they actually
9 know, it's so hard to know where to meet them, so what level are they at,
10 what do they understand, and the language barrier is huge I think,
11 because it's medical terms, so even if you have a translator, like F, who
12 speaks good English, it's really hard, because no translator knows the
13 medical terms, really.

(Extract 5e, from interview between E and M)

This account is informative of the difficulties in communication. The extract first draws on the interpretative repertoire *development is about giving people skills*, and a desire is mentioned 'to teach those foster families' (line 2). In this account, the visitors from Xorg want to find out what level the institutional staff are at, but this is difficult to ascertain; the visitors have brought training and experience from England (lines 4–5), but they don't know at what level to start (lines 9–10). The implication seems to be that the training and experience from England can be directly applied, if only the Xorg staff knew at which rung of the ladder to start. M draws on the interpretative repertoire *the knowledge exists as a globally transferable product*. M says that the language barrier is 'huge' (line 10), and he is perhaps rather despairing, saying that 'no translator knows the medical terms, really' (lines 12–13). There is some distance between the people from England and the people in China, and some considerable challenges, but authority is not lost – the people from England have the knowledge.

The following extract comes from a little later in E and M's interview, when M was giving an account of a research and evaluation trip:

1 E And did you do any training or anything like that, or giving of advice,
2 on these research and evaluation trips?
3
4 M Well, only informally, like we'd go round the orphanage or round the
5 foster family and I'd say 'what do you do, what exercises do you do'
6 and then I'd just watch what they do, and you can tell pretty quickly if

7 they know, if they understand the theory behind it, because if they don't,
8 they'll start doing weird things like massaging someone's head or
9 something like that, so you can tell, you can start to make a picture of
10 what level they're at.

(Extract 5f, from interview between E and M)

This extract draws on the interpretative repertoire *experts evaluate*. Here, observation is enough to make an assessment and to 'make a picture' (line 9), which will perhaps form the basis of future work and the future relationship between these parties. M is positioned as someone who watches and the others are being watched. M suggests a lack of discussion with the people being observed. He is using the interpretative repertoire *actions speak louder than words*. This way of talking allows M to assume a practice is 'weird' (line 8), and he does not consider in this moment whether or not it has a basis in Chinese theory or has some general therapeutic value, and is perhaps being performed for another purpose unrelated to his own interest in and understanding of physiotherapy. The following extract comes from another point in the interview, when M gives an example of the effectiveness of action:

1 M Orphans don't have much status, and if you're a disabled orphan, then
2 it's pretty tough. There's not much value put on you, so, actually that
3 was one of our main goals, that's always one of my main goals,
4 wherever I go, just to try and let people know that, just to raise the value,
5 break through this cultural thing that disabled orphans aren't that
6 important, and you can do that, like I can't speak Chinese, but I can, I'll
7 walk into a room and they're expecting us to do something really
8 complicated and we just go and cuddle some really sick kid lying in the
9 corner, and that's taught them already, and that's probably the most
10 important thing you can do, 'cause if you just teach them physio
11 techniques, if you haven't broken through the cultural barriers first, that
12 there's no value for these kids, then what's the point, so that's probably
13 the main thing we did, first.

(Extract 5g, from interview between E and M)

In this extract M communicates his passion for changing the status of disabled orphans (especially lines 3–6) and creates a picture of doing this on the ground

through action. He presents himself as getting stuck in and getting on with things. He tells E that this is done through action. He will 'cuddle' (line 8) a child and 'that's taught them already' (line 9). This again draws on the interpretative repertoire *actions speak louder than words*. M is producing a model of working in which action overcomes communication difficulties. This is possibly a result of his not being able to speak Mandarin and of the lack of adequate interpretation, which he refers to in Extract 5e above. Again, expert authority is retained because M finds a way of communicating what the others need to know.

Other members of staff at times put more emphasis on communication with institutional staff, as for example in these data from the interview with H. H is a native Mandarin speaker.

- 1 E On the normal training courses, so say like if you were doing one and
2 the actual training itself takes place in the conference centre or whatever
3 [hotel name], would you also visit the orphanage?
4
5 H Yes. Actually, you know, when we did that evaluation and research, we,
6 normally we have a, how to say, we have a talk with the orphanage staff,
7 to exchange, to exchange the ideas, to listen what they have done, and
8 also what, you know, what, what's our opinion [E: Yeah] or you know
9 what's our thoughts. And also we have a further talk with the people
10 who are doing the fostering work.
11
12 E Yeah, and, and where do all those talks take place?
13
14 H Normally in the orphanage, in their meeting room.
15
16 E Right
17
18 H Or, because we also we went to visit foster families [E: Yeah] you know
19 we can chat everywhere, I mean on the bus, on the car [E: Yeah] on the
20 way to the, to the foster families [E: Yeah, yeah] and when we visit the
21 foster family we chat with the foster parents, we talk with the children,
22 and maybe we'll, we'll need to find a progress or you know [E: Yeah]
23 also want to find out the problems or the things need to be enhanced [E:

24 Yeah] or you know need to improve [E: Yeah] maybe on the spot, or you
25 know after the visit, we will have a discussion with the, with the social
26 worker [E: Yeah] and say what we have seen and you know what kind
27 of thing they can do to make better [E: Yeah] or what they have done is
28 good.

(Extract 5h, from interview between E and H)

In this passage E works to maintain the flow of the conversation. She says 'yeah' repeatedly during this short extract. In ethnomethodological conversation-analytic terms, this is a 'response token', or more specifically a 'receipt token', which acknowledges what has been said as unproblematic (Gardner 2001). The use of 'yeah' in this passage perhaps encourages H to continue and maintains a collaborative relationship between E and H.

E asks about whether the Xorg staff visit the orphanage during a training course. H does not talk about a training course, but talks about the research-and-evaluation trips. H says that they 'have a talk' (line 6) with the orphanage staff, and 'have a further talk' (line 9) with the people who are doing the fostering work. She says that they can 'chat everywhere' (line 19), that they 'chat' (line 21) with the foster parents, 'talk' (line 21) with the children, have a 'discussion' (line 25) with the social worker. Her answer to E's question is thus not in terms of whether or not they pay a visit to the orphanage, but is in terms of communication and creates a picture of a highly communicative operation that is fairly informal and flexible.

H takes the stance of the expert and draws on the interpretative repertoire *experts evaluate*. She says that when they are talking with people they are also

thinking about 'what's our opinion' (line 8) and 'what's our thoughts' (line 9). She says that they are looking for 'progress' (line 22) and 'problems' or 'things' that 'need to be enhanced' or 'need to improve' (lines 23–4). She says that in some of the discussions they will tell the workers 'what kind of thing they can do to make [things] better' (lines 26–7) or 'what they have done is good' (lines 27–8). This account differs from the one created with M above, in that it constructs a picture of a highly communicative process. However, it has similarities, in that it is a performance of expertise and authority in which others are judged.

At other moments in the conversations captured in the data, a stance of standing back and not getting involved too closely was important. The following extract is from the interview between E and R:

- 1 E And can you just spell out for me why it's not possible to say take a
2 small group of workers from a training course and then follow their
3 work for a few months like as a case study to see how they are
4 implementing it or something.
5
6 R I think one probably would be resources. That's probably not the main
7 reason. I'd say the main reason is that it wouldn't be, it probably
8 wouldn't be very popular amongst the, the people that we're working
9 with here in China, for a foreign organisation to send someone in to, if
10 you like, monitor the performance of local workers, and I think if you
11 look at it from the converse point of view, that if the Chinese
12 government wanted to send people to the UK to sit in care homes for
13 abandoned and orphaned children in the UK, and monitor the
14 performance of the staff, there would be quite a lot of discomfort, you
15 know, not just amongst the staff, but if the public found out, there
16 would also be discomfort there.

(Extract 5i (a), from interview between E and R)

E asks why it is not possible to follow the work of a small group of workers from a training course for a few months to see how they are implementing 'it'

(line 4). The use of the phrase 'spell out for me' (line 1) by E is interesting; perhaps E thought she already knew the answer or that she had not understood something R had already said in or outside the interview. R says that for a 'foreign organisation' (line 9) to 'monitor the performance of local workers' (line 10) wouldn't be 'popular' (line 8) with the people they are working with. The 'it' (line 4) in E's question is vague and it is not clear whether E is referring to implementing the training or the practice of foster care or something else. R responds to E's question in terms of the monitoring of performance. Later on in his answer he returns to E's question, which he rephrases as 'to put someone into the organisation, into a state orphanage' to 'ascertain' the 'standards' (see Extract 5i (b) below, lines 30–32). E and R are using a way of talking in which the trainees learn something and then go away and execute it – and perform it well or badly – rather than a way of talking that might draw on an exploration of the processes and experiences of the workers in trying to apply the training, on what they learn through practice, and on the relationship of that learning through practice to the learning from the training course itself. I am arguing that in this moment of interaction the idea of a transfer of a product is dominant.

R asks E to 'look at it from the converse point of view' (line 11). R makes a hypothetical comparison using the idea of the Chinese government sending people to the UK to 'sit in care homes' (line 12) to 'monitor the performance of the staff' (lines 13–14), and he says that there would be a lot of discomfort amongst the staff and the public (lines 14–15). This suggests he has interpreted E's question as asking about representatives of the UK authorities monitoring

performance in Chinese institutions, which gives Xorg a particular status.

Although he implies that Xorg is a 'foreign organisation' (line 9), when he gives the converse example, he refers to the Chinese government, not just to a Chinese organisation in the UK.

This talk appears to be a performance of cultural awareness. R's use of the comparison sounds like something that would be said by someone who is aware of issues around culture and equality and is being culturally appropriate. It sounds very 'right on'. Later R says that the research and evaluation visits are 'culturally acceptable' (in Extract 5i (b) below, line 19). He continues the Extract 5i (a) above, saying:

- 17 R And I think that's, that's reasonable. So I think it's, it's, research-and-
18 evaluation visits are the best way to do it, because it's, it's socially
19 acceptable, it's culturally acceptable, we have the resources to do it, and
20 it gives us the best kind of glimpse that we're going to get in terms of
21 how the organisations are running. We, we don't have any
22 responsibility to run any services in China, um, you know, that means
23 that we don't, we don't need to, but it also means we can't, we can't
24 start to run a service here, we don't have the, the mandate to do it, nor,
25 nor, nor have we agreed to do that, we have agreed to put everything
26 we've got into the training, into the training and into the development
27 of those services which are run by ultimately Chinese authorities, and
28 other, you know, Chinese NGOs, we've trained Chinese NGOs as well,
29 private NGOs, non-government organisations, so, I think that's, that's
30 one of the reasons why it would be difficult to then say we're going to
31 put someone into the organisation, into a state orphanage for a few
32 months to try and ascertain the, the, the standards, but we do also get
33 feedback from the orphanages themselves, we actually ask them to, you
34 know, to keep in touch with us and hopefully what they're doing is
35 giving us sort of accurate information.

(Extract 5i (b), from interview between E and R)

R says that they 'don't have any responsibility' (lines 21–2) to run any services in China and clarifies that this means that they 'don't need to' (line 23) and also 'can't' (line 23). He says that they have agreed to 'put everything we've got'

(lines 25–6) into the training. Here, effective authority is maintained through the use of appropriate boundaries, which carries moral connotations. R talks about what is ‘socially acceptable’ and what is ‘culturally acceptable’ (lines 18–19).

These boundaries respect the Chinese authorities and the organisation’s own mandate.

R does not talk about evaluating the training or how the training has been implemented or how the trainees have got on after their return to their workplaces. R says that the research-and-evaluation visits give a ‘kind of glimpse’ (line 20) of ‘how the organisations are running’ (line 21). This does not demonstrate a concern with the Xorg’s training specifically, but more with how foster care is being done in an institution. R creates a distance between Xorg and how the organisations are running. The interpretative repertoire *experts evaluate*, which recurs throughout the data, noticeably is not employed here.

Rather, that way of talking would be inappropriate. A few paragraphs later R presents the distance between Xorg and the institutions as a positive element:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | R | In one sense there’s something good about not being, not being, so for |
| 2 | | the orphanage not to be too exposed to us, that might cause some, again, |
| 3 | | like concern about how much we are, how much our influence is, if you |
| 4 | | like, it’s very culturally and legally appropriate in China for foreign |
| 5 | | organisations to have, you know, positive influence but not sort of |
| 6 | | interference, and not direct kind of influence, as in telling a Chinese |
| 7 | | institution what to do, and how they should, like, and it has, it has to be |
| 8 | | kind of, there’s a sort of an accountability there. |

(Extract 5j, from interview between E and R)

R says that it is ‘good’ (line 1) for ‘the orphanage not to be too exposed to us’ (line 2). He says that in China it is ‘very culturally and legally appropriate’ (line 4) for foreign organisations to have ‘positive influence’ (line 5). He says that it is

not appropriate for there to be 'interference' or a 'direct kind' of influence (line 6). He specifically explains the latter point by saying that they should not be 'telling a Chinese institution what to do' (lines 6–7). Again, R performs great concern with what is culturally appropriate. How R represents the context in which Xorg works here has more resonance with the contextual picture described in Chapter One in terms of the particularities around the position of foreign organisations in China and the complexities around foreign involvement. It clashes, however, with many of the representations of organisational activities illustrated by the data discussed in the previous chapter. This is a reminder of how significant the audience and the action being accomplished are in determining how an activity is constructed in talk. While in some data it was important to locate Xorg as central, in this more private conversation in the interview between E and R, in some ways less of a public representation of the organisation's work, and in which some distance between Xorg and the institutions has already been identified and acknowledged, the use of language works to justify the distance. This account of the organisation's relationships with institutions is more measured than some of the representations illustrated in Chapter Four, and the talk sets out the appropriateness of the situation in which Xorg is one of the foreign organisations that has a 'positive influence' (line 5), but not a 'direct' (line 6) influence. The presentation of this appropriate behaviour is another way in which moral authority is produced, and it shows how the construction of the organisation and its work in talk is driven by context.

In the interview between E and H, E asked what was the most difficult thing about H's job. The following extract continues the interview at this point:

- 1 H And the difficult thing I think is, because I haven't worked in the field of
2 fostering for a long time, so I need some more practice, experience, I
3 mean, to work side by side with families, or social workers, you know,
4 even though maybe I know certain kind of theory, but you cannot just
5 copy the theory and, you know, and use to Chinese context [E: Yeah]
6 because the cultural difference [E: Yeah] we need to consider about this
7 [E: Yeah] and also you need to consider the situation of social work in
8 China, so I think that's difficult for me, you know, to relate the theory to
9 practice in China [E: Yeah, yeah] I think I need to be more, how to say,
10 need to be more thoughtful or whatever. Do you understand what I
11 mean? [E: Yeah, yeah] You know, it is not quite easy to join them
12 together.
13
14 E Yeah, yeah. Are there any particular examples of, well I know you've
15 already mentioned some, but any others where it's difficult to match all
16 this theory with the Chinese context.
17
18 H You know social work in China is at its early infancy [E: Yeah, yeah] so
19 people still have a certain kind of thinking, or how to say, thinking
20 model, for such a long time. Sometimes it's difficult to, you know, to
21 change people's minds. And also, because some people thought I [=they]
22 have already working in this field for so many years [E: Yeah] so, what
23 on earth are you [=H] talking about this! [E: Yeah, yeah] Sometimes you
24 know you need courage! [Laughter] [E: Yeah] You need courage; you
25 need to be brave to talk about this [E: Yeah] to challenge people's minds,
26 to challenge people's views [E: Yeah] I think that's, you know, that's not
27 easy.

(Extract 5k, from interview between E and H)

What is said here works counter to the dominant interpretative repertoire about the development of foster care in China in the data (*foster care in China is taking off*). H is talking about social work (line 18), which is closely related to foster care, and says it is at its 'early infancy' (line 18). H says that she 'cannot just copy the theory' (lines 4–5) because of 'the cultural difference' (line 6). She also mentions 'the situation of social work in China' (lines 7–8) and says that it's difficult for her 'to relate the theory to practice in China' (lines 8–9). This way of talking resonates with the caution emerging in the literature, for example in

relation to attachment theory, for which it is noted that, 'Notions about the quality of attachment and the processes by which it occurs are qualitative judgements made from the perspective of each culture. What is considered an optimal style of attachment may not necessarily be optimal across all cultures' (Robinson 2007 p. 35). H performs a quiet confidence and authority in demonstrating her awareness of such issues. However, H deals with the difficulties presented by saying that 'I [...] need to be more thoughtful' (lines 9–10). She also frames her task in terms of having to 'change people's minds' (line 21), to 'challenge people's minds' (line 25), and 'to challenge people's views' (line 26). She says that it is necessary to have 'courage' (line 24) and 'be brave' (line 25), and that it's 'not easy' (lines 26–7). H presents herself as someone who knows that the cultural difference is significant, and who is doing her best in the face of resistance on a considerable scale. H has a dual identity (Yarrow 2008), possessing both indigenous and Western knowledge, and is in a mediating role between different knowledges.

On some occasions operating effectively in the cultural context was presented as somewhat of a battle. Effective relationships here are ones in which people's views are changed. This will be achieved if H is more thoughtful about how to relate the theory from outside China to practice in China. In addition, however, relating the theory she has learnt in the UK to practice in China requires courage and bravery. Effective operations here are also a fight against intransigence.

The weight that H has on her shoulders is possibly a result of the idea of universal knowledge that demands translation, rather than a gentler approach of exploration with other parties. My fieldnotes show how S also engaged in much personal reflection, telling me on frequent occasions 'I am learning'. S and H took much personal responsibility for the effectiveness of Xorg's work, in the face of an extraordinarily difficult task, which many others also have found challenging. Yan and Tsang reviewed three 'direct practice' books launched by the China Association of Social Work Education and published by Higher Education Press in 2004. They report:

Our observations were as follows: 1) most introduced Western theories and approaches; 2) there was limited coverage of local practice; and 3) there were only sporadic comments on how to integrate the imported theories with local Chinese practice experiences. The content revealed the huge gap between imported theory and local practice. Thus far social work educators in China have not articulated a model or framework of *bentuhuade* [=imported and adapted] social work in China nor has there been any documentation of successful cases of Indigenization. This led us to conclude that, in effect, theories and methods were being adopted wholesale from Anglo-American countries.

(Yan and Tsang 2008p. 196)

My data supports Yan and Tsang's observation in that extracts such as Extract 5k above show a way of understanding the situation, which represents wholesale adoption of theories as unworkable and which also conveys not really knowing how to integrate imported theories with local practices. In Extract 5k above, authority is retained, however, because although H indicates that she can't import theories wholesale, she still has knowledge that others don't have. She will be brave. She is also a mediator and her authority partly comes from that.

Similarly, the performance of understanding in the extract below represents a complicated situation. As part of a response to a question from E, about the reasons for any problems in the sustainability of the foster care projects Xorg is involved with, S says:

- 1 S I think it's if the social worker knows to prepare the family, and also to
2 give them enough support, then children, and the family, the
3 breakdown, you know there should, there won't, or less breakdowns,
4 but I think at the moment, people are just like yeah, we have foster care,
5 we are doing foster care, then the children are growing up, then
6 suddenly the parents found it difficult to, you know, to relate to
7 children, they're older, they argue or they have problems, and then they
8 are ok we can't look after them, so basically I think it's, it's prepare the
9 social workers, and also social workers can help the parents, to, not like
10 when they are little, you just feed them, look after them, but now you
11 need to look at their other needs, I think that should be given more
12 attention, you know, yeah, and also, what's next? What's the option for
13 older children? I think institutions, they're, they are, they are not sure,
14 they don't know.

(Extract 51 (a), from interview between E and S)

In this extract S says that people don't know what to do, especially in regard to what happens when a young person becomes older and challenges that emerge in adolescence to do with the young person's relationship with their foster family. S says that the role of the social worker is important (lines 1 and 9). This seems indisputable and it is informative of the context in which she is working that she is a little cautious. She has identified a major issue around 'breakdowns' (line 3). She talks about the social worker assisting the family with understanding the child's needs beyond material needs, and with the question of what happens to older children. S represents the situation as one full of uncertainty and unknowns – people are doing foster care and then finding they have problems and the foster parents are saying 'we can't look after them' (line 8). The institutions too are 'not sure' (line 13) and 'don't know'

(line 14). S's authority in this extract is more moderate than some of the performances of authority discussed so far. The extract shows language that works counter to several of the more dominant interpretative repertoires discussed so far: *foster care in China is taking off*, *love is transformative*, and *experts evaluate*. S is less certain and less rigid about what needs to be done. She does not lose authority because she still positions herself as someone with insight, who is directing events; however she is talking in terms of providing guidance and suggests what needs to be 'given more attention' (lines 11–12) and ask questions such as 'what's the option?' (line 12). This representation of the work was generated in the context of E and S's private interview. The interview continued as follows:

- 15 S So [...] it's interesting, I did a workshop in Thailand on preparation for
16 independence. Because before I only, I didn't do much of this, we give
17 to people just use it as a framework, but this time when I did that I
18 realised ah we can do more on that, because I found, when I was in
19 Thailand I talked about how it is in China, how it is in UK and I asked
20 how it is in Thailand, and then I just realised, mmm [sound of
21 realisation], personally before I was, I was concerned, wow, prepare
22 young people for independence, there is so many aspects, you cannot, as
23 a training agency, you cannot deal with all the aspects, but, but, but
24 saying that, I think ah now, even though we have given out the
25 framework resources, but I think it's still worthwhile we have short
26 workshops to get like you call quick think or brainstorm in UK, like you
27 know this is how it's done in UK, this is how in China, and we can have
28 like forum or whatever, people can, because now already there are
29 projects doing things, that we can, we can certainly do this, saying ok
30 what you can do, at this stage there is no policies yet, what you can do,
31 you know I, that's something I, coming back from Thailand I was like
32 mmm [sound of realisation], you know.

(Extract 51 (b), from interview between E and S)

S talks about a workshop she gave in Thailand. She says that she realised that 'we can do more' (line 18). She indicates a degree of feeling overwhelmed in the past, when she says 'personally before I was, I was concerned, wow, prepare young people for independence, there is so many aspects, you cannot, as a

training agency, you cannot deal with all the aspects' (lines 21–3). Now she says she has realised that it is 'worthwhile' (line 25) to have 'short workshops' (lines 25–6) and brainstorming sessions (line 26). Like in the previous extract she says that 'already there are projects doing things' (lines 28–9). She is wrestling with having an impossibly large task ahead and being able to tackle it in some way. She says 'we can, we can certainly do this, saying ok what you can do, at this stage there is no policies yet, what you can do' (lines 29–30). What S is saying also sounds like a call for policy as things can be done, but there are 'no policies yet' (line 30).

In this performance of knowing what to do, supporting the development of good care is going to involve exploring and looking at new ideas in this context of uncertainty, which is also a context of lack – of policy and of provision. Ideas about the production of knowledge here are tentative, or at least the knowledge is about not knowing. S raises a lot of questions. The processes around implementing Xorg's work seem more nebulous and S is putting a lot of thought into an exploration of the complexity of the area of work and how the work could be manageable. This contrasts with the punchy statements about what was being done and why it was a good idea in the extracts in the first half of the chapter. S's authority in this extract comes from her representation of looking at what is feasible, appropriate and realistic. In some ways it is a more believable kind of authority because of the quality it has of being considered and measured.

These kinds of conversations, discussed in the latter part of this chapter, were generated in interviews with E. It seems that in these less public constructions of the organisation's work, it was possible for staff to represent themselves having strength in oversight of the issues and the work, hence retaining authority, while also acknowledging difficulties, uncertainties and even the value of exploration over a ready answer.

Conclusion

The conclusions that can be drawn from the data discussed in this chapter, though they focus more specifically on the production of expert identities and moral authority, present some similarity with those in Chapter Four. The nature of the relationship between the actions of Xorg and its staff, and Xorg's publicised undertaking of supporting work with children in state care in China, is consistent with that suggested by the previous chapter. Overall a story is presented in which Xorg has an important role in the development of foster care in China, and promoting this message is a significant activity in itself.

However, this chapter has shown a slightly different way of constructing the problem that Xorg exists to address. The data pertaining to the theme of this chapter largely emphasises passing over the knowledge that Xorg has to the people in China, who are positioned as not having such expertise, skills or information and as not having had the opportunity to make their own mistakes, but could learn from those made in the UK. The ways Xorg is addressing that problem are built up from representations of professional practice and an

additional problem of having to counter 'bad' development and other NGOs that are unprofessional. The problem that children are not in families is still present, however, especially in the construction of moral authority, such as in the case studies from the annual report.

This chapter has also looked at the variation in the way the work was represented; while Xorg and the individual creators of the texts are always represented as in some way knowing what needs to be done, there are also accounts that depict problems around transferring knowledge, and suggest the need for more thought and exploration.

Various kinds of identity work are evident in data illustrated in this chapter. Expert behaviour is professional and constructive and expressly not condemnatory. Expert identities are active, both in terms of responsiveness and to overcome communication difficulties. Those in an evaluative role are also at times represented as highly communicative. Xorg is represented as active, particularly in response to the earthquake, and performances of being able to provide whatever is needed are shown to be important. Positions of authority are also facilitative of forums and brainstorming. Individual identity work around expertise is evident most strongly in the 'elite interview' with B. In the extracts from other interviews, expert identities are more muted, although the individuals maintain performances of authority.

Xorg is mainly positioned as in line with the Chinese government and as distant

from a particular construction of other NGOs, which involves them being well meaning and providing money but not being professional or culturally appropriate. In the accounts that admit more uncertainty around the work, institutional staff are represented in diverse ways, including as easy to teach – especially through demonstration if not conversation, and as resistant to new ideas – requiring thoughtfulness and bravery on the part of Xorg staff. Xorg is both central (to the provision of foster care in the right way) – and appropriately distant (to avoid interfering in the institutions).

Many of the representations discussed in this chapter, and especially the representations of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ development and the moral case studies, appear simplistic. It is very important to have the right ideas and the right approach. Complexities and difficulties are obscured and challenges downgraded. Attention is often directed to idealised outcomes and transformational results. There is a degree of self-vindication in some of the organisational literature, in which morality justifies actions as simply the right thing to do. The lack of discussion in these extracts, as well as the lack of potentially challenging detail, helps to construct the work of Xorg self-evidently right. The complexity of development and the perspectives of others are touched on more in the interviews between E and H and, especially, E and S.

This chapter shows that the construction of expert professional identities and moral authority are heavily dependent on the idea of knowledge as a product, although understandings of both global and local knowledge are visible in the

data. Global knowledge is often represented as the right knowledge, and the right people have it. The importance attributed to knowledge of the local cultural context varies. The idea that one group of people has knowledge that can be given to another group depends on an understanding of cultures as static fixed entities. The next chapter will discuss the construction of the cultural context.

Chapter Six: The Performative Nature of the Cultural Context

This thesis is addressing the performance of identities as Xorg operated, during the fieldwork period, in relation to its publicised undertaking to support work with children in state care in China. My interpretation of the data generated provides a particular picture of what the organisation and the individuals within it were doing during those four-and-a-half months, and suggests that they were working hard to perform being a successful and authoritative organisation. Chapter Four looked at the ways in which Xorg was located in child welfare in China and the ways in which the organisation's position was contextualised. Chapter Five looked at the different ways in which expert and moral authority were built up.

This chapter will examine how the cultural context was constituted. It will focus on how working in the cultural context and how functioning effectively in what was often identified as a cross-cultural situation was performed. As in previous chapters, I shall show how the core concepts at the heart of the chapter are socially constructed. What the ideas in question mean is not self-evident but contingent on social processes. In this chapter, the cultural context, understanding the cultural context and what it means to be effective in the cultural context are not obvious and do not have the certainty of an inevitable definition. Rather, the chapter will show how renditions of those notions depend on and are made possible in moments of interaction (Bhabha 1994). I

have deliberately chosen not to define the cultural context in this introduction.

Rather, I shall analyse how it is constructed.

This chapter is methodologically consistent with the previous two data chapters.

It continues the ethnographic account of activity in the organisation, focusing

on what is accomplished by action, including talk. I shall again use

interpretative repertoires and subject positions and analysis of my ethnographic

fieldnotes.

The interpretative repertoires I have identified in the data relating to this

chapter, in addition to those introduced in Chapter Four and Chapter Five, are:

the UK and China are culturally very different ('huge', 'a lot', 'we' and 'they'

contrasts); *it is practically necessary to change things for China* ('different

[situation/children/circumstances]', 'alter', 'delete'); *in Chinese culture you have*

to build trust first ('[build/gain] trust', 'trust [then ...]', 'trust first'); and *for things*

to work well it is necessary to be sensitive ('be sensitive', 'we have to think').

In this chapter I shall also use membership categorisation analysis (Sacks 1995).

This involves the idea that membership of categories is not predetermined but

is attained through the use of language, and the analysis is concerned with

what the use of terms associated with the category achieves. This approach to

categories is less concerned with the boundaries created and more concerned

with the 'category-based inferences made available' (Potter and Wetherell 1987

p. 132). Categorisation is fundamental to the construction of the cultural context

and analysis of it is particularly useful in addressing my fourth research question about representations of relationships. In practical terms, I have identified categories that are either named or implied, and identified the 'category-bound activities' associated with them and the attributions that are made to each of the categories. The classic example is Sacks's analysis of the first two sentences of a children's story: 'The baby cried. The mommy picked it up' (Sacks 1995). The author assumed that the reader would understand that the mommy was the baby's mommy and that she picked the baby up because the baby was crying. Being nurturing and being helpless are examples of category-bound activities.

The application of membership categorisation analysis is in line with my overall theoretical approach, in which language is social action. The use and elaboration of categories is part of how individuals put together 'a world that is recognizably familiar, orderly and moral' (Baker 2004 p. 175). It relates to my analysis of subject positions, including indirect positioning and the use of attributions to position others in particular way, and also to the use of interpretative repertoires, which are resources from which the category and its implications can be made (Potter and Wetherell 1987 p. 137). The use of categories, and how they are displayed, attributed, accepted and rejected in interactional contexts, is part of how identities are constructed and performed (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998). My analysis is informed by how categories are constructed and reconstructed in an ongoing process, how the expectations associated with a category are worked up, how categories are shaped in use in

different accounts, how there is variation in the construction of categories, how some features and expectations may be inconsistent, and how categories are used and drawn upon for different actions.

In this study as a whole I have been careful not to confuse culture, ethnicity and language nor to make hasty links between actions and ethnicity. Where relevant, I discuss actions which define or construct groups, rather than groups themselves (Wetherell and Potter 1992). While there are seemingly straightforward references to China, the UK, the Chinese and so on in the data relevant to this chapter, I have chosen not to set out here what those terms might mean, but rather to retain the focus on action and look at the construction of categories in the data and the attribution of characteristics to those categories.

The first part of the chapter will address making cultural distinctions; the second part will address processes of constructing relationships.

Making cultural distinctions

Performances of identities while constructing the cultural context were particularly visible in talk about how training material from the UK had been changed for China. Xorg staff voiced concern that the material be of relevance to the Chinese context. Talk about changing content (both in terms of the Xorg training manuals, which were based on texts from the UK, and generally in terms of theory and practice from the UK) varied in the degree of direct

relevance attributed to the UK material and the nature of the changes that were deemed to be necessary.

Often, talking about how training material from the UK had been changed for China manifested a display of knowledge about contextual, or circumstantial, differences between the UK and China. Ideas drawn upon included:

presentational matters and making the material acceptable through changing details such as the characteristics of the children in the case studies and using acceptable terminology; needing to apply the theory, for example attachment theory, to China, by not questioning the theory but being involved in more thought and work; and identifying some practices from the UK as unsuitable.

Use of these ideas is illustrated by the extract below; the extract includes

reference to Xorg's main training book, which introduces foster care to trainees:

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1 | E | When I look at the book I can see where the, you know, the language |
| 2 | | has changed, but it's hard to see, and also I can see where the child's |
| 3 | | case, where the background, like the almost factual background of the |
| 4 | | child is changed so it reflects what is more common in China, but it's |
| 5 | | hard to see the other more general cultural things. |
| 6 | | |
| 7 | B | Oh I think there's a huge cultural difference, I'd have to go through it |
| 8 | | with you, but there's a huge cultural difference to where training |
| 9 | | standards are now, where the training book now is, compared to when |
| 10 | | we first brought it out. Somewhere we've got the English model, but |
| 11 | | you know, it would <u>not</u> be recognisable, it's, it's so far apart. |
| 12 | | |
| 13 | E | Off the top of your head are there any other good examples of, so the |
| 14 | | village one is an example. |
| 15 | | |
| 16 | B | Well, the whole level, the whole level of understanding disabilities, |
| 17 | | genders, the whole area of sexuality would not be, you know, there's, |
| 18 | | there's huge wide issues, topics going across. |
| 19 | | |
| 20 | E | So what's an example within the, within sexuality where you've, you've |
| 21 | | done something to make it, so you haven't just deleted a section, but |
| 22 | | you've made it |
| 23 | | |

- 24 B In China they wouldn't accept anything but a married couple.
25
26 E Right, yeah.
27
28 B So there's a big, and there's issues around who's in the household. So in
29 England we'd be saying, hang on, granddad's in the house, you know,
30 we want to do an assessment to, you know. So it's, it's the abnorm,
31 normally, having an extended member of family in the household
32 whereas in China it's the norm, so you're actually having to assess not
33 only the parents, but the grandparents, maybe aunts and uncles and all
34 sorts. Another one culturally comes to mind is sibling groups, you know.
35 We're dealing with one child, whereas in the UK you'd be dealing with
36 two three four five six seven, sibling groups, so there's issues around
37 that, I mean you could just go on and on, there's so much, so much
38 cultural difference.

(Extract 6a, from interview between E and B)

It is not clear what E is asking here. She seems to be trying to identify cultural differences, rather than contextual differences such as children's backgrounds (lines 1–5), but it is hard to imagine what those might look like. She is also challenging B by saying that 'it's hard to see' (line 5) 'cultural things' (line 5).

Whether or not the question is clear to B, he responds as though he has understood it. B draws on the interpretative repertoire *the UK and China are culturally very different*. The 'huge' (line 7) scale of the cultural difference sets up the amount of work that is implied to have been done on the training book.

There is a huge difference between 'where the training book now is, compared to when we first brought it out' (lines 8–10). B equates where training standards are now with Xorg's training book (lines 8–9) and so implies that the material works.

Interestingly, B implies here that the training book has changed since it was first brought out, whereas in different contexts others told me that there was only

one version of it. B focuses on the work that has been done to transform the material rather than mentioning any continuing exploration of the content.

The talk in this extract avoids the subjects of how the material was changed, to address the contextual differences, or what was involved in the process of making changes to the material. E asks B for an example of where something had been 'done' (line 21) to the material to address a cultural difference, and in response B provides differences between the UK and China around the marital status of foster parents (line 24) and the presence of the extended family in the home (lines 29 and 32–3). Both E and B are concerned with specifics and securing some precise detail. E asks specifically for examples (lines 14 and 20) and B responds by delivering specific examples, albeit representations of contextual differences to the work in the UK and China. This performance of specifics by E and B perhaps precluded a deliberation on any messier aspects of the process of preparing training material. It is possible that B, as the director, was not involved directly in the detailed work of translation and was, therefore, unable to comment, despite the prominent references to adaptation of materials in organisational publicity. A recent annual report states that: 'We have adopted the UK National Standards and Codes of Practice along with assessment procedures. These have been translated and "culturised" to make a comparable Chinese version that works very well.' Whether B has knowledge of how this was done in practice or not, what is significant here is that B's response to E demonstrates knowledge of the differences between the UK and China and that this is given greater import than other possible responses.

Understanding the cultural context in this interaction rests on the notion of the scale of cultural difference, and by the end of Extract 6a it has become a matter of understanding different but fairly stereotypical representations of family structures in the two countries – one child and an extended family in China in contrast to sibling groups and nuclear families in the UK.

B moves between the categories China and England in this passage. Some rigidity is attributed to China in the selection of foster parents, as 'they wouldn't accept anything but' (line 24) a married couple, and this implies a great contrast to England. However, England is then implied to be overzealous in regard to procedures, because if 'granddad's in the house [...] we want to do an assessment' (lines 29–30). This, however, leads to a depiction of some chaos. First, China has 'all sorts' (lines 33–4) to deal with in relation to the assessments required. Then, in contrast to 'one child' in China, England has ever-extending sibling groups with 'two three four five six seven' (line 36) children. My reading of this passage is that the attributions given to China and England are part of the activity of B emphasising the contrast between the two nations, and also depicting a difficult situation and perhaps some despair, with language such as 'anything but' (line 24) and 'all sorts' (lines 33–4).

Extract 6a illustrates how an interview is a collaborative production by the interviewer and interviewee (Holstein and Gubrium 1995) and an opportunity for performances of identities. What B says is partly a response to E's position as a researcher from the UK who was at Xorg to find out how this organisation

with some British staff and UK materials went about supporting work with children in state care in China. B presents himself and the organisation as knowledgeable about the cultural context. My fieldnotes show that I was confused about what the organisation was doing, and by the time of this interview many of my fieldnotes had been written with tones of criticism and suspicion. I had also been told by another NGO that Xorg's materials were still 'very English' and did not demonstrate evidence of collaboration or understanding of the local context. Under the influence of all these factors, and despite the emerging performative focus of my study, I may have wanted to pin down some concrete information about what the organisation had done. Looking back later, however, at myself as E in this extract, it is possible to see that in asking for what had been 'done' (line 21) E was asking for evidence of what had been accomplished, and B's concern was with being knowledgeable and authoritative. In addition, other factors perhaps also inhibited any discussion of the ways in which the process of making changes to the material was difficult or limited: firstly, the nature of this interview, which resembled an elite interview with an expert (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009); and secondly, the nature of the wider conversations beyond the interview in which B, the director, was engaged, such as those pertaining to organisational legitimacy. Such a discussion could have led to greater mutual understanding between E and B, and to particular insights into the challenges of international-development work in social care in China, but it was out of reach because of the constraints of the interactional context.

Explorations of what was involved in changing the material also resulted in displays of vocabulary and accounts of using the right words. The following is a discussion about the translation of a book, which was being done by a translation company but for which H had some responsibility.

- 1 E So can you give me any examples of what you've changed, is it, I mean,
2 is it, so is it mainly simplifying things, or, can you remember off the top
3 of your head any examples?
4
5 H Yeah. When they translate this, when they translate this book we also
6 try to, you know, adapt to Chinese context.
7
8 E Yeah
9
10 H Of course on a basis of, of keep the key thing. We, we don't, don't
11 change the theory, but for certain practice we try to you know adapt to
12 Chinese context. For example, at the moment, nowadays, normally you
13 know the children in China, they come into care, normally they don't
14 have contact with their birth family, but because attachment book,
15 attachment handbook is written by the UK scholar, so like in the book
16 there are some cases regarding the meeting with birth family, so maybe
17 we will change this, because at the moment we don't have this.
18
19 E Ok.
20
21 H So we will change or delete it or you know, so, we try to
22
23 E Ok, so do you think it will, will it be a case of deleting it, or will you
24 change it slightly or
25
26 H We think it might be alright, because you know the theory is still the
27 same [E: Yeah] just, you know, in our practical work, we don't have this
28 situation [E: Yeah] so we think if we keep this it might, you know, it
29 might make our Chinese reader think this is not very much related to us
30 [E: Yeah] maybe it is not very useful, so we just think maybe it is not
31 necessary to, you know, to keep them.
32
33 E Yeah. Are there any other examples of what, what has been changed for
34 the Chinese context?
35
36 H Let me think about it. Also the race, you know.
37
38 E Ah yes.
39
40 H In the UK you have that black people and, and the white people. In this
41 kind of situation we will change into you know the minority or, you
42 know, ethnic, we will change to minority rather than black.
43

44 E Yeah, yeah, yeah. And is it just, from Xorg, is it mainly you that is doing
45 this?

46
47 H Me and S, but mainly me, I mean to do that change of proofreading.

(Extract 6b, from interview between E and H)

This extract draws on an interpretative repertoire introduced in Chapter Five: *the knowledge exists as a globally transferable product*. H says ‘we don’t change the theory’ (lines 10–11) and ‘the theory is still the same’ (lines 26–7). However, the talk also draws on the interpretative repertoire *it is practically necessary to change things for China*. H says that text is changed or deleted because ‘in our practical work, we don’t have this situation’ (lines 27–8). H voices concern that the material about foster care be of relevance to the Chinese context, when she says that not changing some parts of material from the UK ‘might make our Chinese reader think this is not very much related to us’ (line 29). ‘Our Chinese reader’ is constructed as a category that might assume that something is not relevant or useful when in fact it is. This is relevant in addressing my fourth research question about how relationships with others were represented.

In response to E’s request for ‘examples of what [...] has been changed for the Chinese context’ (lines 33–4), H mentions ‘race’ (line 36) and explains that ‘black’ will be changed to ‘minority’ or ‘ethnic’ (lines 40–2). This interaction between E and H involves not talking about the complex histories of the words in question in the UK or elsewhere. It skates over the history of ‘black’ as not only a reference to colour but a political term in the UK, and that the issues of minority disadvantage in the UK and China are hidden beneath a representation of a straightforward change in terms. H refers to ‘proofreading’

(line 47), which I understood to be to check the translation produced by the translation company. This suggests a direct translation of the English material, rather than creation of new material for the different cultural context.

The performance of specifics in this interview extract, especially knowing the right words, possibly prevents a discussion of messier processes involved in making substantive changes to the material. E asks for examples and receives examples. H answers E's question by giving an example of a difference between the UK and China and how this was addressed by changing some words. She is clear and succinct. The interview then moved swiftly on to a different topic.

This move is possibly an example of rapport management (Spencer-Oatey 2004), in which the relationship between E and H is protected and both maintain face.

The 'social distance' (Miller and Glassner 2004) in trust and understanding between E and H affects how H responds to E and in what way the question makes sense to her. There is possibly also an element of miscommunication here (Coupland, Giles et al. 1991; House, Kasper et al. 2003), in which E and H have different ideas about the question and appropriate answers. E and H together, then, produced a contingent and, moreover, highly contained performance of understanding the cultural context, which involved a display of knowing the appropriate vocabulary for that context. Knowing the difference in circumstances and using the right words are important. However, most strikingly, understanding the cultural context involves not changing the theory while changing the work so that it is suitable for the context. This assumes that the theory is neutral and can be applied universally. It involves what seems to

me now, although is not articulated particularly strongly as a dilemma by H in the extract, to be a difficult task: changing the material while not changing it.

The absence of a dialogue about how Xorg had worked with the material and how the material had developed in the local context is possibly indicative of the complex, controversial and sensitive nature of such work, which perhaps makes articulating a statement about the process of transferring or creating knowledge difficult and risky. Possibly this reflects the wider uncertainty around using theories such as those of attachment in 'cross-cultural' situations. Some studies have found problems with the theories; for example, a study in China identified other factors responsible for avoidant attachment (Robinson 2007 p. 27), rather than an insecure relationship with the mother, but there is a general lack of understanding of attachment patterns in different cultures. In the performance of authority in Extract 5k (in Chapter 5), H acknowledges that it is not possible to 'just copy' the theory. In contrast, the interactions between E and B and between E and H in Extracts 6a and 6b above remain on safer ground: what Xorg does know, rather than what it does not know. Effective operations are constructed as those based on knowing the differences between the UK and China. In these moments this knowledge of the contextual differences is valued highly and is presented to E, who is constructed, by herself and others, as someone from the UK without that knowledge. The entanglement of making cultural distinctions and knowing what to do in relation to them is an example of the performative nature of the cultural context.

A more uncertain and unsettled approach to the suitability of the material, to how to make the material acceptable, and to how to work with difference was performed on some occasions, however. The extract below, split into 6c (a) and 6c (b) is an example of talk about how material was taken from the UK and changed for China, and it illustrates the above points around talking about specific contextual differences and finding different vocabulary (part a), as well as uncertainties (part b). Staff at Xorg referred to the 'culturalisation' of the materials, and E begins in this extract by again asking for examples of how things have been changed:

- 1 E Can you give me any examples, the materials being culturalised, can
2 you think of like good examples of how things have been changed for
3 the Chinese context?
4
5 S A lot. Like first, the children are different.
6
7 E The, the reasons why they come into care?
8
9 S Yeah, are different. What they have experienced is different, and also
10 you know we have different laws, regulations, and also, I think B
11 probably mentioned it, like when we first had that material called sexual
12 abuse, you know, we changed to safe care, I think just be sensitive about
13 ethnic, ethnic groups, their value, their culture, their practice in, also like
14 sensitive to Chinese like concept of families, how they discipline [=bring
15 up] children is different from UK, you know.

(Extract 6c (a), from interview between E and S)

In this extract E asks for examples of how the material has been changed for the Chinese context ('culturalised' being a term used by staff at Xorg). First S tells her that the children are different (line 5), and she also refers to different laws and regulations (line 10). She responds to E's question as one asking about the differences between the UK and China. She does not talk about how the material has been changed to be relevant for working with these different children or about how the content of the material was affected by the different

laws, or the impact of those on fostering practices and how the model of fostering might be developing differently. E is left to assume that the necessary changes were made based on this knowledge. Having the knowledge is what is valued. Again, a performance of effective operations is built on knowledge of specific contextual differences.

S also tells E that the material called 'sexual abuse' was changed to material called 'safe care' (line 12). S implies that this is a change of wording – what it was 'called' (line 11) was changed. This suggests that Xorg has catered to the needs of the audience, but also that the audience is one that needs adjustments to be made for it, in that the change is a superficial change to make the material more palatable, which involves positioning the audience as one which will reject an idea if it does not sound palatable. The situation is represented as one of some delicacy and S relies on the common knowledge shared between herself, E and wider audiences about the difficulty of using the term 'sexual abuse' in China (which may be connected to the low rates of public awareness and reported abuse (Ross, Keyes et al. 2005) or to the myths in China around child abuse in general (Dongping and Chan 2008)). S suggests that this is a complicated area to be working in, yet in this performance of effective relationships these complications are dealt with by using a different word – a word that sounds more acceptable.

The mention of these terms, 'sexual abuse' and 'safe care' (lines 11–12), also has other implications as they appear to be regarded as synonyms, which suggests a

possible misunderstanding and confusion about the ideas from the UK that are being drawn upon. Both terms are used in the UK (although it is usually 'safer caring' rather than 'safe care' in the UK) – the term 'safer caring/safe care' is not just a way of getting around a delicate situation in China, which S perhaps implies. Also, the two terms have different meanings in the UK. Safe care is not the opposite of sexual abuse. 'Safer caring' in the UK is a way of working which minimises the risks to foster carers and their families, as well as the children in foster care, and helps to reduce the risk of false allegations against carers looking after children who have been abused in their past history before living with the current foster carer (Slade 2006). 'Safer caring' does not encompass all issues around working with children who have been sexually abused, and neither is it possible to discuss safer caring without the concept of abuse. S mentions the terms in passing and implies knowledge of them and knowledge of how to use them in different contexts, although she does not on this occasion display understanding of the difference between these two terms.

S moves, however, from what might be seen as more factual kinds of contextual differences, such as law, to issues of cultural sensitivity. After telling E about the change in vocabulary, S draws on the interpretative repertoire *for things to work well it is necessary to be sensitive* and talks about being 'sensitive' (lines 12 and 14). It is necessary to be sensitive to the values, cultures and concepts of ethnic groups. It is also necessary and to be sensitive to the differences between the UK and China, in particular to different concepts of family and different methods of discipline, which I understood was S's word for the idea of

'bringing up' a child (lines 14–15). S presents herself as sensitive to difference. At the same time S, a Chinese woman from China, starts to distance herself a little from being Chinese, referring to what 'they' (line 14) do. She says that the way Chinese people bring up children is different and she positions herself as a little removed from that. S moves categories during this passage. A 'we' and a 'they' are established. At first she is part of the 'we' that has different laws, but later she is outside that group as 'they' require sensitive approaches. This perhaps positions her as a protector or as authoritative in some way – especially as it gives her a stance of having professional perspective when she talks about the people Xorg is working with.

Distancing themselves from 'the Chinese' was something the ethnically Chinese staff of Xorg sometimes did. For example, my fieldnotes recount how, one afternoon before one of the training courses, S explained to me the idea of 'hosting' the delegates from beginning to end, which she said was something that the 'traditional' Chinese expect, and something that she herself had been learning. S said that she had learnt a lot of lessons from the first study trip organised by Xorg to take institutional and governmental staff to the UK. The participants had expected to be looked after right from the first moment of being on the plane, and she had had to make sure that they had had drinks and food they liked. She said that some of the UK families they had stayed with had given them cold water to drink instead of hot water. She added that some of the Chinese people had wanted to open the windows, but that in some of the houses this had not been possible because of the design of the windows, and

that some of them had been cold, so she had had to tell the host families to provide extra blankets. S said that she did not feel Chinese; I noted in my fieldnotes that S had said this before and said it again later that week. S said that in China people expected to have someone to 'serve' them, and that checking they were ok all the time made them feel important. She anticipated that in the coming training course that week, it would be necessary to accompany those attending all the time. For example, there would have to be friendly faces in the dining room in the hotel at all meal times. S said the delegates needed 'babysitting'.

In what S communicated to me that afternoon, as constructed in my fieldnotes, S separates out the 'traditional' Chinese and distances herself from them. She tells me of their expectations and also tells me that she is learning and does not feel Chinese. The use of 'babysitting' is interesting in that while that term usually implies caring for or watching over, here the delegates seem to have more power and the babysitter is in fact serving them. S is possibly placed in this serving role due to her presence as a relatively young female. However, her account was a performance for me, from the UK, of knowing the Chinese and different types of Chinese, and it is built on a description of the actions needing to be taken so that relationships go smoothly. S is demonstrating that she knows how to act with the 'traditional' Chinese, and she is imparting knowledge of that to E, while positioning herself as modern and international in outlook. Effective relationships here, involve knowing how to behave. Once again, the value placed on knowing the difference between UK people and

Chinese people, and on having cultural or intercultural knowledge, is high, and is bound up with individuals' identity work.

Following Extract 6c (a) above, the interview continued as follows:

- 16 E Is that, so the discipline example, is that something where, because in
17 the, in the, I tried looking at the blue book [Xorg's training manual] and
18 I can see where, you know, the language has been changed but, and I
19 can see the children's cases, they're obviously different, but I found it
20 quite hard to spot the other, where some ideas have changed.
- 21 S I think for discipline it's interesting, because we purposefully like kept
22 some of the questions from the original ones [the UK materials which
23 Xorg's training manual is based on], but when we did the training,
24 actually we have to, actually that book [Xorg's training manual] when
25 we do the training like individually we have to alter it, to be suitable, [...]
26 there is one question saying before the child go to bed a male carer
27 spend time talking about stories with the child, but like in the UK
28 training material, it's like no you shouldn't, or some things just trying to
29 say this is negative practice, you know, it's not good, but in China it's,
30 it's different, so I think that material, um, just by looking at that material
31 is already so different from what, after our, we have done the training,
32 you know there are still many things that um you know we adjust, we,
33 we use that model, like say ok here they raise the questions, to raise the,
34 to ask people to be sensitive, so we have to think about in China, like I
35 think there is one is, is suitable, like can you, I don't know if it's in that
36 training or we developed, can you wear your dressing gown um in
37 your sitting room um when the child is there, because in China it's, you,
38 you change into your pyjamas immediately, so it's something that you
39 know, that's very good to discuss, you know, maybe you need to be
40 sensitive, so I think for us, is we, we gradually develop and change,
41 adjust.
42

(Extract 6c (b), from interview between E and S)

E challenges S over Xorg's training manual saying that she finds it 'hard to spot [...] where some ideas have changed' (line 20). S then goes into further detail, saying that in the training book itself they purposefully kept some of the original questions from the UK material (lines 22–3), thus allowing E's assertion that it might not have changed all that much, and saying that they need to 'alter' (line 26) the material when they do the training, to make it 'suitable' (line

26). This altering of the material appears to be done on an ongoing basis, and there are 'still many things' (line 33) that they 'adjust' (line 33). Operating effectively and understanding the cultural context are in these moments built up from responsiveness. This is in contrast to Extract 6a above, in which B focuses on the work that has been done to transform the material, rather than mentioning any continuing exploration of the content.

S gives the examples of whether a male carer should read bedtime stories to a child, and whether a dressing gown should be worn in a sitting room when the child is there. She says that some of these, like the male carer reading bedtime stories, are 'negative practice' (line 30) in the UK, but in China it's different. This extract is a little confusing, because S's presentation of the messages from the UK material does not resonate with more common understandings. For example, safer-caring policies in the UK generally mention dressing gowns when they are explaining that foster parents should wear one, rather than wear only underwear or no underwear. Policies may also state that it is good practice to knock before entering the child's bedroom. What I want to focus on, however, is that S is saying that the material is unsuitable, and through the construction of difference between the UK and China is also positioning herself in a mediator role. She has something of a 'dual identity' (Yarrow 2008) with both indigenous and Western knowledge. In this passage, the category China is associated with things being different (line 31), the need for thought (line 35) and the need for sensitivity (line 41). However, significantly, while constructing

difference, she presents some disorientation with regard to the two sets of materials, with the solution being 'to discuss' (line 40) the issues.

S says that the question about wearing a dressing gown or pyjamas in the sitting room is a good one to discuss, although she cannot remember whether this was in the original material from the UK or whether it was introduced in China. S implies that the material is ultimately used as food for thought when she says that 'we use that model, like say ok here they raise the questions [...] to ask people to be sensitive, so we have to think about in China' (lines 34–5). S draws on the interpretative repertoire *for things to work well it is necessary to be sensitive*; however, she implies that this is not just something she does in the training but is a message which is given to the trainees – that they should be sensitive in their work of training the foster carers. Possibly S is balancing the needs of foster carers and what is in the materials. She suggests that the content of the training is being worked out when she says 'we gradually develop and change' (line 41). S does not draw upon the dominant interpretative repertoire which recurred in other data: *the knowledge exists as a globally transferable product*.

S's movement in this interview from contextual differences, to being sensitive herself, to asking others to be sensitive, to not being able to remember whether a specific useful question to discuss was in the UK or China material anyway, illustrates the difficulties of the process. What I see S working towards is a view of knowledge production in which it is a dynamic and messy process, an ongoing process of transformation, and also a process central to which are the

interactions of all those involved. She suggests that the material is a stimulus for discussion. When S tells E about discussion with the trainees, she describes a flexible, sensitive approach and, moreover, is not only talking about the development of training material that can be set down in a document, but what constitutes the training itself – the discussion in that moment. Ultimately, S tells E that talking over the issues with the trainees is important, and drawing this to E's attention is part of the performance of effective operations in regard to the training materials and relationships with trainees.

During the section of interview in Extract 6c (b) above, then, there is initially a discussion of contextual differences and what can be done to make the material acceptable. However, after a challenging question from E, S says that it is necessary to work out the messages within training material for this context, which is an ongoing process that occurs in the training courses. S needed E's help, in the form of the challenge, to reach this point and talk about the training happening in this way. Crucially, by telling E that the material is being explored and developed on an ongoing basis in the interaction with the recipients of the material, S changes the position of the recipients of the material from people who need to have things made acceptable for them, to people who are central to the development of new material, as the training material is developed in communication with the recipients. Interestingly, this was not a point of pride, or presented with confidence as a leading practice. For S, this has not been endorsed by anyone. This co-construction of a story about how the material is worked on with trainees is another illustration of how an interview is a

collaborative production by the interviewer and interviewee (Holstein and Gubrium 1995).

The difference in acceptability of and familiarity with ideas between academia and, possibly, other arenas of development activity, on the one hand, and on the ground in this organisation, on the other, is one of the most striking findings to emerge from these data. In the example discussed here, there is a suggestion that it is difficult to apply material from the UK directly to China, and that it is necessary to develop substantively different content in the local context, and that this is currently in a tentative stage of sensitive exploration and discussion. Academic literature debating what is made visible by my data already exists. For example, Yan and Tsang say, 'Indigenization [of social work] is not just a linear importing-adapting process [...] Indigenization is a political process involving a complex interaction between agents who represent the *bentude* (native and local) and the *bentuhuade* (imported and adapted) knowledge and practice' (Yan and Tsang 2008 p. 192). Other academics advocate the approach of 'authentization' in the field of indigenous social work:

The philosophical approach of authentization urges social workers in non-Western contexts to move away from simply adapting and modifying Western social work theory and practice to that of generating knowledge and practice models from the ground up, drawing on the values, beliefs, customs and cultural norms of local and Indigenous helping practices. It is argued that through this process whereby local culture is used as a primary source for knowledge and practice development, social work practice can become culturally appropriate, relevant and authentic. Authentization may lead to a rethinking of what is really universal in social work by challenging the dominance of Western beliefs and values.

(Gray, Coates et al. 2008b p. 5)

S is doing something which I wish to argue is very important, but she does not appear to be aware of it. I see her confronting an issue around the production of

knowledge, which is vital to the essence of development work and attempting to understand and articulate the challenges it presents.

The extract below also shows an initial preoccupation with differences between the UK and China and touches on using different words; however, it reveals different actions in response to another challenge from E.

- 1 E So when you say that the materials have been culturalised, what does
2 that mean to you?
3
4 B It means that there is a whole process of translation. And, and, and
5 culturalised being culture, so for instance when I first came, we were all
6 very politically correct in the UK and we would go in and do
7 assessments on families and ask them if they walk around in the nude,
8 and you know there was a whole risk assessment thing which really
9 was very abrasive in China so we had to move away from things like
10 sexual abuse to talk about safer caring um and so some initial
11 terminologies, but maybe also, as you move deeper, looking at some
12 cultural things, so, you know, when I look back, we always, in England
13 we always place one child in one family, and we would do a matching
14 process with that child to that family. In China they place twelve
15 children in twelve families in one village and it's like woah, you know,
16 we wouldn't do that in England, but actually in time you see the
17 benefits from it.

(Extract 6d, from interview between E and B)

In response to E's question about the meaning of the materials being 'culturalised', B presents himself and Xorg as operating effectively in the cultural context by constructing and drawing upon categories, as well as interpretative repertoires.

B draws on the interpretative repertoire *it is practically necessary to change things for China* and implies that Xorg learnt what didn't work in China and adapted to that. There is a suggestion that changes were a reaction to what was uncomfortable in China, albeit in important areas such as risk assessment, and

B presents this as part of the process of 'culturalisation' and thus working effectively in this area.

Different activities and attributions are connected to the categories UK and China. Firstly, the UK is 'politically correct' (line 6) and keen on assessments including personal matters such as nudity at home. China is sensitive in response to such an 'abrasive' (line 9) approach. B displays irritation with or criticism of the process in the UK, let alone its application in China – the term 'politically correct' (line 6) usually carries negative connotations of over-concern with matters of justice, and the use of 'thing' (line 8) after risk assessment perhaps trivialises or dismisses that practice. B suggests that the UK is over-the-top in these matters. In Extract 6d, B uses the same example as S in Extract 6c (a) above, saying that Xorg moved away from the term 'sexual abuse' to 'safer caring' (line 10), but again the use of these terms is confused. It is, however, a performance of being practical. Effective operations were achieved by being sensible – identifying what things didn't work and changing them. B talks about what was done. Issues were sorted out. In this moment, he does not talk about the development of working practices or of the training, or about the training material as ongoing.

B himself refers to concerns with 'initial terminologies' (lines 10–11). He then refers to moving 'deeper' (line 11) with regard to 'cultural things' (line 12). In this moment, the category England places one child in one family (line 13) through a matching process, while the category China does things 'en masse'

and places twelve children in twelve families in one village (lines 14–15). It is not immediately clear how this is different, but it suggests more of a connection between neighbouring foster families in the Chinese village than exists in a UK town, and B presents himself as having learnt from China when he says ‘in time you see the benefits from it’ (lines 16–17). B draws on the interpretative repertoire *the UK and China are culturally very different* when he uses phrases such as ‘woah, you know, we wouldn’t do that in England’ (lines 15–16) and strong descriptions such as ‘abrasive’ (line 9).

B creates the impression that he does not blindly follow UK practice, and shows that he can be critical of UK practice and that he possesses judgement. He gives a performance of not being arrogant and lets E know that he has overseen appropriate responses to the situation in China. This performance of understanding the cultural context is based on ideas about changing things because of the considerable cultural difference between the UK and China.

In the extract below, from shortly afterwards in the same interview, B gives another example of a difference between the UK and China.

- 1 B The whole area around looking at the clinical side of, of care in China,
2 which we wouldn’t have at all, they, they put so much attention on
3 measuring and weighing and doing all the things that, you know, we go
4 round and have a cup of tea, and is he doing alright, what’s school,
5 how’s school going, nice school report, does he have any troubles, we’re
6 looking more at the emotional, psychological aspects of the child,
7 they’re looking at clinical and educational.
8
9 E Yeah. So how did you deal with that then, or how have you dealt with
10 that?
11

- 12 B Well, I don't think we need to deal with it, for them it's beneficial and I
13 don't see any harm in it, but what we do need to do is to introduce the
14 emotional, psychological, so they've always had strong clinical, strong
15 education, they just haven't had the, the emotional side so in a sense
16 we've added the emotional side of it and it would probably be quite
17 good to bring the clinical and educational back to England, 'cause you
18 know, we just don't look at that with our kids, and our kids don't
19 actually achieve very well and probably are very unhealthy, you know.
20 So, I mean, yeah, I mean one day, if I ever unpicked it all, I mean I think
21 there would be a ton to learn from China for any Western nation, you
22 know, they have strong nuclear family, strong extended family, strong
23 support groups, in the UK, you know if the fostering officer didn't get
24 out to the family, it'd break down. I knew in my job, if I didn't get out
25 there once a week that the placement would break down. In China
26 there's such strong support, you know, that, that it's, it's really
27 conducive to, to making very successful family placements.

(Extract 6e, from interview between E and B)

This is an example of a piece of rhetorical work in which B positions the account he is constructing against the commonsense alternatives of which E and the wider audience are aware (Billig 1991; 1996). B does his rhetorical work by assuming that E shares his understanding of the usual categorisation of China as being in need of knowledge and learning from the UK, rather than the notion that China has a lot to teach the UK. He maintains a clear distinction between the two categories by also referring to them as 'we' and 'they'. He reconstructs the categories during this section of talk, and there is movement from the usual attributions to and expectations of the categories UK and China, to different and less consistent ones. As I shall discuss below, the achievement of this use of language is to change the focus of the discussion. The talk works towards what is ultimately an argument about family values.

B draws on the interpretative repertoire *the UK and China are culturally very different*. B contrasts the Chinese looking at the 'clinical' (line 1) and people in

the UK looking at the 'emotional, psychological aspects' (line 6). He talks about what 'they've always had' (line 14) and what 'they just haven't had' (line 15) and looks at what 'we wouldn't have at all' (line 2). This reinforces a distinction between the two categories; although my focus is on the inferences the audience is encouraged to make about the categories, rather than the boundaries themselves, in this case demarcating them allows B to make claims about what one category can offer the other. B implies that 'measuring and weighing' (line 3) are not enough, and draws on the idea that only having a casual chat and 'a cup of tea' (line 4) is also inadequate. E assumes the former to be a problem in some way and asks how it has been dealt with, and B says it does not need to be dealt with (line 12). He then says, however, that it is necessary 'to introduce the emotional, psychological' (line 14). B performs having a balanced approach. He does not criticise what China is doing but suggests an addition.

B is far more critical of the UK than of China. This is a surprising reversal of one of the historically dominant ways of thinking in international development, which is around the deficit model and what the recipients of any intervention lack in contrast to the developers. B implies that there are a lot of problems in the UK and that some of what is done in China is good and could be taken back to the UK. B says that 'our kids don't actually achieve very well and probably are very unhealthy' (lines 18–19). He then says that 'there would be a ton to learn from China for any Western nation' (lines 21–2) and makes a link between what could be learnt from China and 'strong nuclear family, strong extended family, strong support groups' (lines 22–3). He ends by saying that on the basis

of the family and community support there can be very successful family placements in China.

At this moment, in terms of effective operations, B implies that the work can be successful because the other party, which here is China in general, has the right values. He expresses approval of China. A conversation about a difference between China and the UK moves away from a question of how this might be addressed in the organisation's work, to a discussion of how there is a lot to learn from China, how China has the right values in having strong families and that there is something about China that is conducive to successful placements. This is in contrast to some problems with underachieving, unhealthy children in the UK. B's comments about what the UK could learn from China challenge common ideas, given that often what is identified relates to working with minority and immigrant populations in the UK. In addition, the recourse to values is interesting. B does not talk about social-work values and how social-work values from the UK, or those within the international definition of social work issued jointly by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) in 2001, may apply or, in fact, be rather contentious in China. Rather, he talks about family values. He makes a link between strong families – 'strong nuclear family' (line 22) and 'strong extended family' (line 22) – and successful placements. He does not mention changes in Chinese society, including the one-child policy narrowing family structures, migration separating parents and children who are often raised by grandparents, and increases in divorce and separation. The

construction of the cultural context is based on comparisons and value judgements entangled with a particular stereotypical construction of contemporary Chinese society, which resonates with a wider valorisation of 'Asian values' (Louie 2008).

Constructing relationships

Understandings of the cultural context were also built around performances of knowing what to do to form effective relationships. These performances often involved talking about trust and the building up of trust. During their interview, and following a discussion about the current hiatus in the work of the organisation, E asked S how she would describe the relationship that Xorg had with the institutions.

- 1 E And so before, how would you describe the relationship with the
2 institutions?
3
4 S You mean compared now or?
5
6 E Or, or just on its own.
7
8 S I think generally, like I said before, is you have to gain the trust, from
9 the institutions, and the, the previous fifteen project sites, they already
10 have the trust, but the new ones still need to build up, you know, how
11 to build up again is like, for example, the [name of an earthquake zone]
12 orphanage, I am sure after the training we've done, the visit we did,
13 with the support we give them, even it's tiny little bit then that's
14 something, we built trust with them, and they see us have done
15 something to help them, or we are, what we are doing is helpful, then
16 it's helpful for us in future, to continue to give them support.

(Extract 6f, from interview between E and S)

S draws on the interpretative repertoire *in Chinese culture you have to build trust first* and tells E that it is necessary to build up trust (line 8). She gives an example of one of the key institutions in the earthquake area and says that trust was built by giving training and support (lines 12–13). S says that even though

it was a small amount, it built trust (lines 13–14). From my ethnographic fieldnotes, I understand that the work done there in the aftermath of the earthquake was tangential to training on foster care and E and S may have been aware of this. S says that if the institutions see Xorg doing ‘something to help them’ (line 15), then it is easier for Xorg ‘to continue to give them support’ (line 16), which appears to be a euphemism for being able to work with them in future.

S takes a particular slant on trust – that it is gained by action, by doing something helpful. This draws on an interpretative repertoire introduced in Chapter Five: *actions speak louder than words*. The effective relationship originates in that action. S displays confidence that Xorg is helpful. She is perhaps suggesting a situation in which the institutions will have confident expectations of Xorg as a reliable organisation. S produces a model in which Xorg does something, the institution sees it as helpful, and that response helps Xorg to continue to give support to, that is to work with, that institution in the future. Xorg and the staff at Xorg are represented as being skilled in understanding what is required to develop the relationship and being able to execute the building of trust. There are clear ‘us’ and ‘them’ categories in this extract, corresponding to the institutions and Xorg. In addition, Xorg is represented as an active organisation, which does things. The institutional staff are positioned as people who do not trust easily and not until they have seen evidence that the organisation does something that is helpful. Doing something for an institution provides a way in later. Yet the institutions also have a

considerable degree of power and autonomy in this account. Xorg may be able to work with them in the future as a result of doing something helpful now. The institutions must see the action as helpful. This raises questions about what each party defines as helpful and how that is negotiated, but these potentially problematic details are not discussed here. Xorg is represented as an organisation that can and does find ways in. It is a utilitarian use of the idea of trust. Overall this is a performance of knowing what to do to gain access later. The cultural context, specifically with regard to accessing child-welfare institutions, is one of potential mistrust or, even, distrust.

During the interview between E and M, in a discussion about the forthcoming year M suggested making nine or ten trips a year to one place and E asked about the benefits of that.

- 1 E What will that allow? What's the benefit of that? Just to spell it out for
2 me.
3
4 M Well, like learning is repetition, and you need to teach them again and
5 again and again, and then follow up. Obviously, how do we know it's
6 being effective? And 'cause we are learning so much as well, I think
7 we'd learn. Like, if we are going to help China long term we need to
8 learn, how do we help people, and I think going back several times will
9 help so much and then the orphanage starts to relax and they trust you
10 and then they'll actually start telling, giving you more information
11 which they would never give anyone else, especially Westerners, where
12 usually they would close up, but they will trust you, give you more
13 information and learn loads about what the truth is, all the secrets, so
14 yeah, hopefully that will happen.

(Extract 6g, from interview between E and M)

This extract draws on an interpretative repertoire introduced in Chapter Four:

development is about giving people skills. After a confident statement that 'learning is repetition' (line 4), M himself asks how it is possible to know that Xorg's

work is being effective (lines 5–6). There is a display of reflexivity and also modesty when M says that ‘we are learning so much as well’ (line 6). This has similarities with B’s statement in Extract 6e above that there is a ‘ton to learn’ from China. M says that ‘to help China long term’ (line 7) will require frequent return visits to an institution, and then the institution will start to relax and trust (lines 8–9). This trust will lead to being given ‘information’ (line 10), which Westerners would not normally hear (line 11). In addition it will result in learning ‘loads’ about ‘what the truth is, all the secrets’ (lines 13), and M’s audience is left to assume that this will assist Xorg in knowing how to help people.

Although there appears to be a step back from the confident beginning, the position of Xorg staff as the experts is retained, as the trust will facilitate access, which will enable the collation of information, almost for assessment, rather than for a collaborative process. M is ambitious, saying that ‘loads’ (line 13) will be learnt. M creates a model of how to help that involves making return visits, gaining trust, and obtaining information, including secrets. There is a notion of ‘the truth’ of what is going on in the institution. M talks about trust in order to answer his own question about effective teaching and learning and also to talk about getting the institution to open up. Overall, it is a performance of knowing how to establish an effective relationship, which is one in which secrets are outed. This is a particular construction of the relationship between Xorg and the institutions. Also, relationships between Xorg and institutions are being equated with differences between Chinese people and Westerners. This is

interesting because while M himself fits easily into the category of Westerner, Xorg does not do so quite so easily, given the varied backgrounds of its staff.

M discussed trust again in another part of the interview, given in the extract below, in which he and E created an account of a visit to an institution, at which they were both present.

- 1 E Did you, was there anything in your mind, that you were thinking, oh I
2 could make his situation easier if I do this, if I do something in a
3 particular way, or if I say something in a particular way?
4
5 M I'm just trying to think, how do you mean?
6
7 E Just, well, for example, because I noticed that you made a lot of positive
8 comments.
9
10 M When we were in the room with the kids?
11
12 E Yeah, and also in the meeting room beforehand, and my observation
13 was that whenever they said anything about what they were doing you
14 always responded saying 'oh that's great', 'that's really good' kind of, so
15 I just wondered if there was, for example, was there anything else that
16 you did?
17
18 M Mm
19
20 E I mean did you, because to me it looked quite deliberate, that did.
21
22 M Yeah, yeah, it was, actually, that was kind of responding to, well I was
23 trying to respond to the Chinese culture, you have to build trust first,
24 and as soon as they think that you're arrogant, if they think there's these
25 two arrogant foreigners just coming in, just telling us, criticising what
26 we're doing, looking down on us, then there's just no point, they just
27 won't respect that, won't respect that at all. But if you go there, well,
28 maybe I'm wrong, I don't know, but I just wanted us to build a
29 relationship first, and there was loads of good points, I wasn't like lying.
30
31 E No, no. And, sorry I keep interrupting you.
32
33 M So just point out all the good points and 'cause I didn't feel able on that
34 trip to teach them loads of stuff, not loads of stuff, we were just doing
35 some very basic stuff, and I thought one of the biggest, one of the most
36 useful things you can do is encourage them, because they are more
37 motivated then, if you just criticise them, I think you should for every
38 one criticism, you should give, this is what my dad's always told me,
39 you should give nine positive things, for every one criticism, my dad's

40 ultra positive, he's amazing, and um, I think that motivates people, and
41 then they trust you and they feel safe with you, that yeah, although
42 everyone's got faults, like I've got faults, loads, but we just don't criticise
43 each other too much, we're safe with each other, and then when we trust
44 each other, then in love we can tell each other, hey, this isn't quite right,
45 we need to, we really need to change this 'cause this is, we could do this
46 better, and then they'll probably listen to you more, so maybe in the
47 next few trips that MR [M's replacement] goes back hopefully I think it
48 will be different, yeah.

(Extract 6h, from interview between E and M)

E does a lot of probing and pushing, and challenging, in the co-creation of the above account, which for M is a defensive account as illustrated by the line in which M tells E that he wasn't lying in his praise of the institutional staff (line 29). M draws upon the interpretative repertoire *in Chinese culture you have to build trust first* and says he was trying to respond to the Chinese culture and so needed to 'build trust first' (line 23). He positions himself as different to 'arrogant foreigners' (line 25) who look down on people and criticise them (lines 25–6). He says that the institutional staff do not respect arrogance. He tells E that it is useful to encourage them, because then they are more motivated (lines 36–7). He identifies himself as someone who doesn't criticise and draws on moral guidance from his dad (lines 38–9). He says that saying positive things motivates people and also people then 'trust you' and 'feel safe with you' (lines 40–1). He thus claims moral authority in his response to E's challenge about what, in particular, he did.

M talks a lot about praise and motivation and talks cautiously about criticism. This uses an interpretative repertoire from Chapter Five: *it is better to praise than to criticise*. As in Extract 6f above, there is a utilitarian aspect to building trust, as it is going to help with the organisation's work. The positivity which M talks

Chapter Six: The Performative Nature of the Cultural Context

about will build trust, and when trust has been established, then it is possible to change things. M is confident that his encouragement will motivate the workers. This idea involves positioning institutional staff as people who will be motivated by encouragement from an outsider, and as people who generally need to have built trust and who need to have been made to feel safe before being able to take feedback. M and Xorg are placed in the role of people who manage others, including emotionally, in order to achieve what they have identified as the desired result. Effective relationships are ones in which people can be persuaded to change the way they do things because they feel safe. The cultural context is presented as one requiring careful handling of relationships to avoid being seen as 'arrogant foreigners' (line 25), by being positive and motivating.

While performing the research interview with E – the researcher from the UK finding out how things are done in China – M constructs a performance of knowing what to do to build effective relationships. My fieldnotes of this trip to an institution, however, captured another performance, one of authority, of knowing and telling institutional staff what they should be doing.

The trip was to an institution that was receiving children who were usually under the care of child-welfare institutions, but who had had operations to help with contractures as a result of cerebral palsy, and were coming to live in this institution so that they could receive the necessary rehabilitation. My fieldnotes recount that early on in the trip, after an introductory meeting, we went into the

rehabilitation room and it was agreed that work would begin right away. The children would be taken one by one, with the staff showing M and MR (who was to be taking over from M when M left Xorg) what they had been doing, so that M and MR could make some suggestions.

M made some introductions. He said that Xorg was very excited about the project (presumably he meant the project between Xorg and the institution, specifically on rehabilitation – although I recorded in my fieldnotes that I was unsure because nothing had been agreed at that stage) and that Xorg would like to support them more and more. M said that they wanted to find out how they could help in the future. He said he was very impressed by what he had seen so far and that ‘we are learning from you’. I noted that M said that he had seen some other institutions where things were very ‘bad’. He said that in the US and UK this operation is only done if the children have good support and have a mum and dad, and that in this situation ‘you are the mum and dad’ (meaning the workers there). M said that he wanted to stress that children need love and encouragement every day, and that it was important to set a plan, and goals, for children. At this point, the man in charge showed him one of the clipboards. Each child had a clipboard and on it was the assessment report that was done every month.

In those few minutes, early in the first day, M’s actions covered a wide range. Creating his relationship with his audience in that moment involved M performing many different actions: he assessed (which involved praising them),

he compared (their institution with previous institutions and the criteria for the operation in the US and UK), and he told them what was important to do. He took control and gave a performance of authority.

I observed that M repeated basic simple messages of general principles throughout the two days. These were that the staff had a great responsibility (for parenting, for planning and setting goals, and for the child's posture at each moment of the day); that rehabilitation (physiotherapy) was key to the children's wellbeing (and was more important than surgery, required continuous practice and could prevent further operations); that the children needed to be playing happily (that rehabilitation should be done through play, that it was hard for children to change when they were sad, that the children needed stimulation); and that some of the children's problems were a result of their previous care. M's repetition of these messages was consistent and clear. I am not suggesting that M did not do what he said he did in the interview with E. He did praise staff, thus enacting what he said about encouragement.

However, effective relationships also involved apprising staff of the key messages outlined above. The cultural context represented in my fieldnotes on the performance of this visit was one in which imparting information was just as important, if not more so, than building a relationship, and began almost immediately. This also echoes some of the issues discussed in Chapter Five around the idea of global knowledge and knowledge transfer with minimal discussion on the ground.

One of the other trips to child-welfare institutions that I went on with Xorg, which I have called Visit One, was somewhat of a puzzle. I shall describe this trip in depth below because the actions of Xorg and its staff on this visit construct the cultural context in a way that is oppositional to how it is constructed in much of my other data, as illustrated thus far in this chapter. The ad hoc nature of the trip has similarities with Visit Three, to which Extract 6h refers, but in many other ways the trip was unique. Nevertheless, it was one of the three trips, that is a third of the trips I participated in, and while it was unique, actions on this trip are nevertheless informative of relationships between Xorg and child-welfare institutions. In the weeks preceding the trip I had been told that it was variously about the visitors doing voluntary work; about establishing a relationship with the institution, which would benefit it in the process of opening up to the community; and about establishing an ongoing relationship with the institution. It may also have been as a result of B's personal pressures from his personal contacts outside work. Although I shall discuss possible motives for the trip below, ultimately the purpose of the trip remained unclear. On the trip was a group of people comprising Xorg staff, me, and a large number of members of a church in Hong Kong – in total around 45 people. The discussion below is based on analysis of fieldnotes of preparatory briefings, two consecutive days of visits to the orphanage, and relevant interactions afterwards. I shall discuss the various representations of the purpose of the trip and the nature of the interactions and negotiations between the visitors and the institution.

The arrangements for the trip were enacted in such a way as to represent a somewhat delicate context. In the week before the trip, the institution appeared to be resisting, while Xorg was persisting. In my fieldnotes I wrote that the trip was 'on and off'. On one day the institution telephoned to say the visit would not be possible because of construction work blocking the road. There was much speculation in the office as to whether this was an excuse for cancelling the visit. Apparently the orphanage had not in fact cancelled the trip, but had said that it should take place later in the year. In the end, after H had spoken to the orphanage, the trip was back on again for the following week. Two days later, the orphanage telephoned again to cancel the visit, and H sorted it out again. While H did this work, who or what was the driving force behind this trip was a puzzle.

Staff at Xorg presented the visit positively to the church group from Hong Kong, and told them how much the orphanage was looking forward to their visit and that Xorg hoped it would be an ongoing relationship. Immediately prior to the trip, S gave a briefing to all the participants. S balanced some information about how much the orphanage was looking forward to the visit with some instructions about photography. She said that it was alright for people to photograph each other doing voluntary work, but that for any pictures with the children they 'must must' ask permission, and that the orphanage had said this to her no less than 10 times. B broke in to support what S was saying. He said that the orphanage already knew that it was not one of the best in China. He said that, in particular, there shouldn't be any photos of anything such as the

toilets or some dirty place, which might cause the orphanage to lose face. He said that what was important was developing trust and a relationship with the orphanage. My impression was that he viewed the visits as the beginning of an ongoing relationship. The leaders from the church group suggested that it would be better just to forbid photography. In this briefing S and B taught the group about the context, which was represented as delicate and fragile. Both performed trying to make sure the trip went smoothly. The performative nature of the cultural context is shown by how it is constructed as one in which trust and ongoing relationships are important, despite the lack of transparency, or perhaps, rather, the multiplicity of motives for the trip, which will be discussed further below.

The trip took place over two days; we returned home on the night of the first day and travelled again on the second day. On day one, the group spent half an hour – a short time because of a delay in getting to the institution – in the orphanage before lunch, having a look around and listening to speeches in the conference room around the boardroom table. Lunch was a banquet at a local restaurant. I recorded in my fieldnotes a discussion about the coaches returning. As we had arrived later than planned, instead of going back to Beijing straight after lunch, one coach would leave at 1pm, but another would leave at 3pm, allowing the group to do a bit of voluntary work that afternoon. The coach making the early departure was doing so because some members of the group were involved in preparing for the dinner in Xorg's building that evening, which involved a speech by an experienced missionary. M said that that

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evening was the main opportunity for evangelism because there were 'loads of non-Christians coming'. The group seemed very concerned about the waste of food. S suggested to the orphanage staff that it be packed up and given to people in the village. She didn't want to suggest taking it back to the orphanage in case they were offended, but the orphanage staff then suggested that they could take it back to the orphanage. Half the group then returned to the orphanage. In the afternoon we carried out some practical tasks, digging a few holes where trees were going to be planted and cleaning windows, and there was some playing with the children and some picking up and putting down of the children. On this first day there were less than ten children present. There were more children around the following day.

On day two, part of the group played with the children and part of the group knocked down a wall ready for some construction work, and again there was much picking up of the children. For our lunch, we were taken to another restaurant. Banquet lunches are common practice and not unique to this institution or to child-welfare institutions in general. After lunch, there was more playing with the children and a musical performance. One member of the church group rhetorically asked what it would be like for the staff after we had left, and I had the impression that she was speculating that they were going to have a hard time. The group had brought balloons for the children and blew these up before the performance. During the songs performed by the visitors, some of the children listened attentively and some were distracted by other things, like hitting each other with balloons for most of the time. My fieldnotes

expressed my inability to judge whether the whole event was just alien to the children, or whether they would have had difficulty concentrating on anything. At the end, some of the children were asked to sing by the members of staff. I had the impression that they didn't really have anything to perform. One child sang something that just involved repeating one line a few times. The babies were not brought down for the musical performance. S said that the staff had said it was better for them to sleep, but S said she could not understand this.

In many ways, the visit over the two days felt like a trip out for the visiting group. They had a good look at the institution and (some of) its occupants, they ate well (and wrestled with their consciences over the leftovers and waste), they engaged in voluntary work to do good, and they took a generally sentimental stance towards the children and their lives. A more sympathetic analysis might suggest the visitors tried to do 'the right thing'. This group was concerned to 'serve'. This was not a long-term, structured programme of volunteering or working with the institution, however, and there appeared to have been little consultation, and especially none with the young people themselves. Those visiting made up a group of volunteers, the majority of whom did not possess professional knowledge and skills pertinent to this area. For them, doing the right thing involved performing some practical tasks and showing affection to the children, even though it was a brief visit from a large group of strangers. This visit resonates with the depictions of the ad hoc nature of foreign aid and contact mentioned in Chapter One, but is in contrast to the dominant representations of Xorg's work discussed in the empirical chapters.

Our visiting group was larger in size, number and (auditory) volume than the staff and residents of the institution. On day one there were less than 10 children and around 45 of us. My data on this trip is highly informative of my own discomfort. The following fieldnote extract from the time, about the afternoon of the first day, is illustrative of this.

After a while, [member of institutional staff] came out and said that the children were ready again for us to spend a bit more time with them. There was some discussion about what time the group should leave. A couple of the members of staff said that because we had to go all the way back to Beijing and then come out again tomorrow that we should leave at 2.30pm. F said that because of the dinner this evening that it would be better to leave at 2.30pm (was she picking up that the orphanage wanted us to leave ASAP or was she just concerned about being on time for the dinner??). The member of the Hong Kong group who had been designated leader for the afternoon after the others went back on the early bus said that they would stay until 3.00pm. (She seemed to want to say as long as possible.) I felt that there was some tension in the air. Also, the control seemed to have moved from Xorg (as F is a junior member of staff) to the leader of the foreign group. F ended up in a role where she was negotiating on behalf of the group against the orphanage. There seemed to be a consensus in the foreign group that it was ultimately beneficial for the orphanage, although they might not realise it (!), if we stayed as long as possible. The orphanage seemed to lose power in this situation. I felt uncomfortable. I felt we were intruding.

Some of us went back to the inner courtyard while the others finished digging the holes. We were asked to help clean the windows. The job only took a few minutes because there were so many of us and not many windows. We stood around in this courtyard for the rest of the time and some people played with the children. There was a lot of standing around. Some people were picking up and putting down the children.

I became more and more uncomfortable and I felt that by the end what was going on was more for the benefit of the visitors than the children. I went and stood outside. There was already one member of the group out there by the coach who said that we had finished the programme for the day and we should go home. After a while the others came out and the coach set off for Beijing.

(Extract from fieldnote)

The above extract demonstrates my concerns at the time of writing around what I considered to be the intrusion of the group of outsiders and some lack of purpose. There seemed to be a general unspoken consensus that it was a good

idea to pick up the children and to try to entertain them in some way. I was unable to adopt the view that this was good stimulation for them, and a good demonstration of love and affection, given the one-off nature of the event. I felt uncomfortable that our large group of people had suddenly descended upon this small group of babies and children and started doing things to them. It felt like interference. The actions described in my fieldnotes, of course constructed by me, represent the context as one of some tension, and some of the actors I describe may have experienced it this way too.

I thought at the time that in total there were around 20 babies, children and young people living at the orphanage. However, M later went back for another trip to this institution. He reported that on this later trip the orphanage staff had brought out more disabled children, and that he had kept asking to see the older children, but they weren't brought to him. He speculated that his colleague and translator F had been too embarrassed to ask. After this additional visit by M, discussion in the office concluded that the orphanage had a number of children who had been lying in beds for years. With hindsight, this would mean that on our visit, a number of rooms had been deliberately sealed off to us and a number of children hidden from us – specifically a number of severely disabled children left to lie in bed. Although assessing the factual accuracy of this proposition is beyond the scope of my analysis or the aims of this thesis, awareness of this possibility highlights the way in which the relationship between Xorg and the institution was possibly controlled, including by the institution, despite the interference I felt on the part of Xorg,

which the institution was possibly resisting. M's discussion of being introduced to more children on his return visit is also a representation of the cultural context as one in which the practice of going there and doing something helps access later, which resonates with the depiction of the context in Extract 6f. On this trip, M relates being successful in gaining further access to the workings of the institution to the first exploratory trip by the large group.

In addition to the voluntary work, relationships between Xorg and the institution were also enacted in a more formal way. On the morning of the first day the group was led to the institution's conference room for a formal welcome. S later told me that the orphanage staff were unsure of how to treat the group and, while she might have suggested something more informal, they suggested going to the conference room. S performs some awareness of appropriate behaviour in telling me that. In the conference room, there was a big boardroom table and we all sat and stood around this table. There were two speeches, by the director of the orphanage and by B. The director talked about the history of the institution and how it had had to raise money by renting out some of the buildings, but that this was to end soon and that the orphanage was getting money to build a new building. In contrast to this mention of money, B said that the day was about making friends and that the people who had come were from a church in Hong Kong. B went on to say that they wanted to 'serve', and asked the orphanage staff to tell them what to do, saying this would be helpful. He said that he hoped that everyone would make friends, and that next time the group would be able to stay over in the institution as this would be

easier than travelling back and forth. Friendship, which has particular significance for depictions of relations with foreigners in China, as discussed in Chapter One, is drawn upon by the outsider, the foreigner. There was also some giving of gifts. This is a traditional practice but nevertheless highlights a different angle to the relationship and places Xorg in the role of benefactor rather than, or as well as, friend. The director of the institution gave B a present, which was a big souvenir-type book about the city and its places of interest, and a fan.

I was not able to generate data on many understandings of the visit on the part of the orphanage staff. However, as we were standing around, one member of staff brought out a photo album of all the children who had been internationally adopted. Some of the children there could see that we were looking at the pictures of the others who had been adopted. I felt uncomfortable about this, and at one point the paediatrician who was a member of the church group took the album and closed it. Possibly the member of orphanage staff in question associated our faces with those of international adopters and understood the visit as in some way related to international adoption. This is speculation, but relates to the most common reason for foreign contact with institutions.

Another understanding of the visit emerged over time. On the second day, I noted that before the coach set off, the pastor in the group led a prayer on each bus. He told the group not to underestimate the significance of what it was

doing. On that day, the group was going to sing some songs for the children and the group members practised these on the coach. These were church songs. And indeed, in the afternoon, the group sang a number of songs for the children. One song started 'My God is big', 'My God loves me' etc., with appropriate accompanying actions.

Although I was conscious of the religious faith of the visitors, it was not until after the visit was over that I attributed greater importance to this for understandings of the meaning of the visit. On the morning after our two day-trips, the pastor from the church group put his head round the training-room door asking if we would like to join the group as they were going to pray together and say goodbye. We went into the big training room. All of the Hong Kong group were in there. The pastor was at the front with B. The pastor started by saying that he was very pleased with the group. There had been no problems with anyone in the group and this was a first for a 'mission trip'. This was the first time I had heard anyone actually refer to the trip as a 'mission trip'. In my fieldnotes I expressed shock and a sense of deception. The pastor said that this wasn't the kind of trip to have immediate results, but that the group had been planting seeds. He said that the Chinese were beautiful people. B then gave the group a card, which we had all signed. On the envelope, to my surprise, he had written 'to the seed planters'. Amongst other things, he said that it was wonderful that there was such a revival of Christianity going on in China at the moment. B asked members of Xorg staff to come forward and say a few words. They thanked the group for coming and for the love that they had

shown to the Chinese orphans. Again, my own discomfort is prominent in my ethnographic fieldnotes, and I recorded how I felt disturbed as staff, some of whom were not religious or not of the same faith, were being asked to endorse the mission trip. The pastor said that we should honour Jesus, whereupon most people moved towards the piano, while some of us left the room. This goodbye meeting was enacted as if everyone in the room was part of the mission trip – even though the pastor knew some of us were not religious. No distinction was made between the Hong Kong group and Xorg staff – we were all being absorbed into this particular rendition of what we had all been doing.

Later, I had lunch with some Xorg staff who were vigorously expressing their views about the morning's activities. One staff member, A, said in Chinese, and then repeated to me in English in case I did not catch it all, that the day before she had seen a Korean film about a prostitute. At first the woman didn't want to become a prostitute, but then after a while she went out to try and persuade other people to become prostitutes. She said that the psychology of this was the same as that of the church group – that whenever people are in a group they want other people to join them. I asked her if she had known that a lot of the staff were Christian before she had started working at Xorg. She said that she had known that B was, but not 'like this'. She said 'lately it's been a bit', and then waved her hand from side to side, which I took to mean somewhat dubious. It is significant that A told me her views here. She was perhaps letting off steam, and perhaps distancing herself from what had happened. Perhaps others were also trying to make sense of this whole event and were also feeling

uncomfortable. My fieldnotes show that I was shocked by the nature of the trip, which took me by surprise."

On the same day, S told me another story related to religion. S said that someone she knew was looking for a receptionist, but that she wanted a Christian, and when S had said she didn't know if the person she was suggesting was a Christian and would have to find out, she didn't hear anything from the woman. S said she was very angry, because if the woman was a Christian herself, then she should just give someone a job and it shouldn't matter whether they were Christian or not. Again, it was significant that S was saying this to me on this day. It was perhaps important for S to communicate to me her distance from others on the moral question around how people of religious faith act towards themselves and others.

The above discussion provides additional insight into the performative nature of the cultural context in the way that it shows the different meanings of an institutional visit and something of the varying ways in which relationships between Xorg and an institution were enacted. It indicates the difficulties, tensions, and challenges in Xorg's work with child-welfare institutions. The context is represented as one in which it is appropriate to take a large group of people to an institution to undertake tasks peripheral to the training of institutional staff in child-care matters. The trip is puzzling because many of the actions, and especially the missionary, or evangelical, activity, transgress the cultural sensitivity that was given import in other data, as shown earlier in this

chapter. Moreover, the missionary activity is represented as a deliberate, intentional undertaking. Missionary activity carries connotations of the civilizing missions of international religious agencies of the past (Hirono 2008), although the relationship between the civilising mission and religion has changed over time, as Hirono shows. Given the repeated statements in my data about the importance of trust, some aspects of the trip are surprising. Overall, however, the data generated from this trip shows how activity to support provision for children in state care in China, and how actors in that work see and understand themselves, are shaped in moments of time at the micro level by the ways in which motives are depicted and enacted in varying ways in different contexts with different audiences.

Conclusion

The actions of Xorg and its staff, including those performed with me, illustrated by the data discussed in this chapter show that being informed about cultural difference is an important part of the performance of identities. Performances of knowing how to act in a context that is represented as a delicate and fragile one, in which institutions mistrust or distrust, are also an important way in which Xorg addresses its publicised undertaking of supporting work with children in state care in China.

In the construction of the cultural context, the problem Xorg exists to address is constituted from cultural difference and the scale of cultural difference. In some moments a somewhat intractable problem is created, which involves changing

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the training material while not changing it. The ways in which Xorg is addressing that problem most often centre either on knowledge of contextual and circumstantial differences and the right vocabulary, or on being able to act in ways that resolve the tension associated with working with institutions.

A variety of identity and positioning work is evident. As in the data discussed in previous chapters, Xorg is active. It is also strategic. It is represented as building trust to gain access and making people feel safe so as to gain information, with the institutions and their staff accordingly being positioned as not trusting. Securing information about the workings of an institution is a signifier of a good relationship.

It is important to be sensitive to different cultures. In relation to practices related to social work, at times an organisational identity of developing and changing is developed, especially with regard to the training material and as a result of discussion with trainees. At other times, however, staff are more absolute in their knowledge, such as when apprising institutional staff of key messages about care. Moreover, Xorg also engages in deliberate missionary activity in what appears to be opposition to the cultural sensitivity depicted elsewhere, although some members of staff create distance between themselves and this missionary activity.

Speakers often distance themselves or make disparaging remarks about their own ethnicities or places of origin. Some of the Chinese individuals do not feel

'Chinese' and describe the Chinese as, for example, needing 'babysitting'. Some of the British individuals make remarks which detract from the status of UK practices, such as talking about inadequacies in social work in the UK and many children being 'unhealthy', while elevating the asset of the right values in Chinese society.

Overall, the data are about telling E what is different between the UK and China, and this is perhaps what the speakers understood as what they had to do for this research with E, who came from the UK to understand how things were working in China. However, the data present a potentially bewildering range of performances. Perhaps what unites them is the avoidance of the subject of social-work practice, whether in a highly contained performance such as in the limited discussion of words in the interview between E and H, or in data in which the discussion develops. Examples of the latter are seen when E and B produce an account which diverts to values in Chinese society, and when E and S produce an account that resolves the problem of translating materials with the depiction of an exploratory training process with trainees. What is central to the performance of identities is the construction of the cultural context as one that Xorg knows how to handle.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The snapshot of identity work in an INGO that I have presented in this thesis adds to understandings of being an actor in international development. I have shown how identities, and ways of making sense of being part of an INGO in child welfare in China, were in flux as the meaning of the organisation Xorg was being worked out in different contexts. I have contributed an example of the way in which insight, into what actors understand themselves and their organisation to be doing, can be gained when the understanding of identities as being constantly constructed and reconstructed in fragmentary ways is used along with a process-based understanding of organisations and applied to a development project and INGO such as Xorg.

My focus on the performance of identities has shown what people thought it important to accomplish in relations with particular audiences. I have analysed what was performed with and for others, in order to understand how individuals made sense of who they were and what they were doing. The thesis has examined how people at Xorg shaped what kinds of actors they were by looking at how the organisation and its work was represented and at how personal and organisational identities were constructed by actions, especially talk, at the micro level. It has shown how people interpreted and negotiated the positions they were adopting or resisting in interaction with others.

My theoretical position has used discourse analysis, as well as narrative analysis, within an ethnographic study to provide a way of examining how being an actor in international development in child welfare in China is carried out. I have explored the discursive context of being an actor in an international-development project in child welfare in China. I have shown how ways of thinking about being such an actor were drawn upon and shaped by the speech of members of staff and in other texts produced in Xorg. This chapter will review my interpretation of the data in relation to the research questions and suggest tensions that have implications for policy and practice.

Addressing the research questions

Question One

How were the actions of Xorg and its staff, during the fieldwork period and including those performed with me, related to Xorg's publicised undertaking of supporting work with children in state care in China?

Members of Xorg staff worked hard to communicate that the work of the organisation was going well. Generally, it was depicted as going extremely well. The organisation was not represented as surviving in a challenging environment and doing difficult work, as might have been expected based on my interpretation of the literature discussed in Chapter One, especially the literature attributing importance to organisational survival (Chan 2008). Xorg's continued presence in China was not central to its depictions of success. Rather, the organisation excelled at work well within its capability in a context it was

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easily able to manage. E was even told a story about possible expansion to Thailand (Chapter Four). Communicating this key message was related to the organisation's publicised undertaking of supporting work with children in state care, in that it was a significant activity in itself and one which contributed to representations of the organisation as one with momentum. Actions, especially talk, often amplified the impact and influence of the organisation to a considerable degree.

Some of the data were generated directly in performances with and for E. Performances of research interviews, for example, were in part performances of telling E, from the UK, about how things worked in China and in particular about Xorg's competence in knowing what to do and how to do it. These performances were sometimes generated in response to a challenge from E as is discussed in regard to Extracts 4g and 5a. My theoretical approach understands speakers to draw on the existing discursive resources, which are the building blocks of conversations and perform not only for the immediate audience but also for an unseen wider audience. Speakers are using language that has already been rehearsed, although it is shaped slightly differently in the new interactions with others such as E. I have also drawn on data selected but not directly generated by me, such as a television programme and organisational literature. While such public representations of the work could be expected to promote the organisation, they nevertheless constructed it in a particular way; I have shown how this was patterned, as some ideas but not others were used in different pieces of identity work, as discussed under Question Three below.

In line with the narrative turn more generally, storytelling was a popular form of action in Xorg. The use of stories functioned not only to legitimate the organisation's work and to build up the work, but also was a response to doubt. Overall the actions of Xorg and its staff told a story in which Xorg had an important role in the development of foster care in China. This story worked to realise the value of Xorg and was related to the activity of supporting work with children in state care in China by substantiating Xorg's contribution. The shorter stories told to the funder about the transformed village and the boy walking (Chapter Four) created order, coherence and accomplishment while representing situations likely to be fraught with difficulties and uncontrollability. The audience was perhaps infantilised by the simplicity of these stories and others such as the moral case studies (Chapter Five) but again order and clarity were created when issues of complexity were represented. Rather than sharing the confusing and chaotic aspects of the working context, the stories presented the audience with a controlled situation and afforded the opportunity to feel part of the success.

The uncertain and unsettling situation for INGOs in China, particularly for those working in child welfare, as was suggested in Chapter One, is not prominent in the data. I have analysed the variation in the discursive constructions and representations of Xorg's work. Notwithstanding this variation, the actions of the staff at Xorg supported their publicised undertaking of supporting work with children in state care in the way those actions worked

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to inspire belief in the capacity and integrity of Xorg and the individuals within it.

Question Two

How were the problem Xorg existed to address and the ways in which Xorg was addressing that problem constituted?

The three data chapters together show that the dominant representations of Xorg's work depicted it as addressing the problem of crossing considerable cultural difference to hand over knowledge to address another problem, the main problem, that children were not in families. The problem was constituted from cultural and contextual differences and moral beliefs. My micro approach has highlighted the contradictions in talk, particularly between language resonating with a universal model in which China can learn from the mistakes the UK made, on the one hand, and language acknowledging the implications of cultural difference, on the other. While such contradictions were not often acknowledged by the speakers and authors of texts as a dilemma, my interpretation of the data suggests that Xorg set itself a demanding challenge containing a contradiction: on the one hand, changing training material for China because of the differences, while, on the other hand, not changing it because it contained the right ideas (e.g. Extract 6b). By drawing on the interpretative repertoire *the UK and China are culturally very different*, contextual knowledge could be valued, and possession of it attributed to Xorg, and Xorg could be represented as having done a huge amount of work to cross the

cultural difference. The interpretative repertoire *it is practically necessary to change things for China* affords Xorg the opportunity to be sensible and is a way of avoiding the deeper complexity presented by changing things while not changing them.

The main depiction of the problem Xorg existed to address dominated the more public representations of the work, in, for example, organisational literature, the TV programme and the interviews between E and more senior staff, particularly B. However, Chapter Five, in particular, showed variation in the way the work was represented, in interviews between E and other members of staff. While authority was maintained, accounts also depicted problems around transferring knowledge and suggested the need for more thought and exploration. In this rendition of the problem Xorg existed to address, cultural difference was not so much an obstacle to be crossed in the transfer of universal knowledge, as an integral part of the generation of new knowledge.

The problem Xorg existed to address was not often related to the contextual social-policy framework at the national and provincial levels in China, or to the impact of the level of welfare provision more generally, which the literature, discussed in Chapter One, indicates is relevant. The intricacies of developing practice in the provision for children in state care, or the complexities of the developing field of social work in China, were not often discussed. What was central to the performance of identities was the construction of the contextual and cultural context as one that Xorg knew how to handle (Chapter Six).

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Practice was not described in any detail in representations of the work. The emphasis was on the possession, by Xorg, of a clear, straightforward and implementable solution.

The ways in which Xorg was addressing the problem involved Xorg being able to handle whatever was required. My micro approach has been valuable in showing how the construction of the organisation was context driven. In different interactional contexts, Xorg was depicted variously as giving skills, placing children in families, influencing government, having knowledge of contextual and circumstantial differences and the right vocabulary, or being able to act in ways that resolved the tension associated with working with institutions.

The ways Xorg was addressing the problem were also built up from representations of professional competency, which were constructed in contrast to 'bad' development and other NGOs that were unprofessional. While references were made to having the support of the Chinese government and to working in partnership with the Chinese authorities, the overall impression created was of Xorg acting single-handedly, by itself and unassisted, to tackle the problem of developing foster care in China. The location of Xorg in any detailed or specific wider social-welfare context, as outlined in Chapter One, is missing. The placement of children in families was, however, an important image in representations of the organisation, and there was frequent conflation of Xorg's own work with the general idea of the development of foster care in

China and the end result of placements achieved. Despite the sensitivity of the field of work, suggested by my reading of the background literature discussed in Chapter One, the way that Xorg was working was unproblematic. It was doing the right things and doing things in the right way.

Question Three

What kind of identity work was evident: what kinds of identities were being built and how?

As discussed in Chapter Three, I approached organisational identity and personal identity as intertwined. Successful identities were the accomplishment of much identity work. By analysing the social construction of success I have shown the variation in the ways in which success was performed. Successful identities were constructed by drawing on different interpretative repertoires to locate Xorg in child welfare in China and to contextualise its activities in an international network of important people and places (Chapter Four). Success involved having a big impact, and being at the centre of things. Xorg's influence was emphasised. Success involved a moral foundation relating to childcare and international development. Success was linked to the construction of expert and professional identities and moral authority (Chapter Five), and to being able to handle what the context presented (Chapter Six). In some moments success was constructed through reference to leaving a legacy and wider social change while in others it was built on personal stories of what had already been done for an individual child and a village community (Chapter Four). Xorg's work

was frequently conflated with a depiction of revolutionary change for children in state care throughout China, however, and this helped to build up the scale and scope of the organisation's transformative impact.

However, my reading of the data highlights dilemmas, although these were not directly acknowledged by the speakers and authors of texts, between the idea of Xorg as the crux of developments and other ways of talking about the work. For example, the interpretative repertoire *good development projects can be scaled up or replicated and continue after the developers have left* provided an opportunity for reference to a legacy and imparted moral authority in the way that it enabled the work to be constructed as sustainable and not creating dependency. It allowed Xorg to depict an excellent model as the basis of its way of working, albeit one that relied on opaque processes of social change. Similarly, the rhetorical character of the language around the interpretative repertoire *development is about giving people skills* yielded moral authority for Xorg. Xorg was empowering, professional, effective and morally superior to other development organisations. However, there was a dilemma visible to me between this and the depictions of Xorg's own centrality to the placement of children. In addition, the interpretative repertoires available in the discursive context drew upon development buzzwords such as 'partnership', 'sustainability' and 'empowerment' (e.g. Extract 4d) which have been criticised for disguising old patterns of inequalities with new language (Edelman and Haugerud 2005).

My focus on identity work has shown how what is known about foster care in China and the role of development organisations can vary depending on the interactional context in which they are being represented and the corresponding identities that are being built. Variation in the identity work performed, and in representations of the provision for children in state care, was visible in the data. The interpretative repertoire *foster care in China is taking off* provides an example of both the way what is known about the state of care provision and Xorg's organisational identities are entwined, and the way that such knowledge is context-driven. This way of talking rendered Xorg at the centre of developments, with an influence of considerable magnitude. Xorg's work and the development of foster care in China were conflated. Foster care in China was not always taking off, however. At other times, for example in the building of professional authority, it was more important to acknowledge that social work was in its early infancy and that there were problems copying a theory from elsewhere to China (Extract 5k). Similarly, speakers used and worked against a familiar way of talking about funders. Drawing on the interpretative repertoire *the demands of funders are constraining and not necessarily in organisations' interests* allowed a depiction of Xorg as taking control and balancing the demands of funders and other important considerations. However, this way of talking was turned on its head when B spoke of how he kept Xorg's work and mission feasible in the face of encouragement towards international expansion from Xorg's supporters (Chapter Four).

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Various kinds of identity work were evident in the construction of expert identities and moral authority. The interpretative repertoire *experts evaluate* was drawn upon to build status for Xorg staff as experts whose 'seeing for themselves' was sufficient to determine what the situation was (Extract 5a), and to depict Xorg staff as judging and assessing in order to provide advice (Extract 5h). At times, staff were more absolute in their knowledge, such as when apprising institutional staff of key messages about care (Chapter Five). Other ways of maintaining authority were used in other conversations, however. For example, positions of authority were also facilitative of forums and brainstorming in a depiction of how the training material was developed (Extract 5l (b)). In relation to practices related to social work, at times an organisational identity of developing and changing was developed, especially with regard to the training material and as a result of discussion with trainees. In another case, the emphasis was on how it was appropriate to have distance from the institutions and only a glimpse of how things were working in a construction of appropriately distant relations between Xorg and institutions, to avoid interference in the work of the institutions (Extract 5j).

Question Four

How were relationships with others represented, and with what effect?

In this study I have shown how ways of talking were used to accept and reject positions. Xorg itself was often positioned as the provider of a strong development programme. It took control in setting up foster-care programmes,

it was very active, and it was leaving a legacy. Xorg even had the funders under its control. Xorg was central to the development of foster care in China and to the provision of foster care in the right way (Chapter Four).

Xorg was mainly positioned as in line with the Chinese government, or sometimes as helping the Chinese government. Xorg had a close relationship with the government. Xorg was positioned as distant from a particular construction of other NGOs, which involved these NGOs being well meaning and providing money but not being professional. The interpretative repertoire *some NGOs are unprofessional* was used to construct Xorg as professional and gave it moral authority. Similarly, the interpretative repertoire *everyone wants to be in China* set up Xorg as in an advanced position, as it was already working in China. The interpretative repertoire *it is better to praise than to criticise* also established some moral high ground over other approaches.

Xorg was active. The interpretative repertoire *actions speak louder than words* helped to produce a context of mistrust and distrust, as well as a solution. It also allowed Xorg to retain authority in the face of communication difficulties. It resonates with the idea of having the right knowledge and ideas, but in this case Xorg was doing the right thing, which would sort things out. Xorg was also strategic. It was represented as building trust to gain access and making people feel safe so as to gain information. Securing information about the workings of an institution was a signifier of a good relationship.

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The workers in institutions were needing to be trained and were being equipped for the work ahead. They were positioned as lacking expertise, skills or information; they also hadn't had the opportunity to make their own mistakes, but could learn from those made in the UK. In the dominant representations of the work, workers were passive and ineffective on their own, and needed to receive expert professional guidance. Most often they were not given an active role in the project of improving provision for children in state care. They were not independent, but were instead targets who were assumed to be ignorant, unaware and needing to be managed emotionally by Xorg, which could encourage them, motivate them and make them feel safe.

In the accounts that admitted more uncertainty around the work, institutional staff were represented in diverse ways, including as easy to teach (especially through demonstration if not conversation), and as resistant to new ideas (requiring thoughtfulness and bravery on the part of Xorg staff).

The institutions and their staff were also often positioned as not trusting.

My analysis of the data has also looked at variability in representations of the work and of relationships. Chapters Five and Six showed the variation in the ways that relationships were represented. Extracts 5k and 5l showed how ideas about exploring options were incorporated into performances of authority; in Chapter Six, in Extract 6c in particular, the trainees were positioned as creating the learning with Xorg's help.

In some ways, the workers not doing the right thing became the problem Xorg existed to address. What the workers were doing was the problem that needed to be addressed, and, rather than alternative emphases on, for example, the problems generated by the social policy context or lack of it, uniting with the Chinese authorities to sort out the workers was a dominant depiction of the situation.

Xorg also engaged in missionary activity, although some members of staff created distance between themselves and this activity. In many ways, however, the activity around the 'mission trip' constructed the context as one in which this type of activity was appropriate, with its corresponding positioning of the people affected.

In all of this, the underlying message was that the children needed families and were having their lives transformed.

Tensions that have implications for policy and practice

This section sets out the issues and problems that my study of identity work has highlighted. An analysis of context-driven identity work in moments of interaction has highlighted some of the diversity of understandings of what kinds of actors Xorg staff understood themselves to be. This diversity indicates that staff were faced with a number of difficult dilemmas to negotiate. These were mostly not articulated as dilemmas by the staff themselves, but I shall discuss in this section some of the tensions that my reading of the data suggests.

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These tensions have implications for policy and practice and the ways individuals and organisations think about what they are doing.

My research has shown why the discursive analytic tools of interpretative repertoires and subject positions are useful within an ethnographic study and what kind of insights can be delivered by this kind of research, which uses specific methods of analysis appropriate to certain forms of action within a broader study. The use of these discursive analytic tools has demonstrated that certain pieces of information or knowledge are only the case in particular interactional settings. For example, in the interactions between E and members of staff at Xorg, sometimes *foster care in China is taking off* (e.g. in Extract 4a, in which the idea is entwined with the locating of Xorg at the centre of developments, and in Extract 5a, in which Xorg is located in an important development), and sometimes it is not (e.g. in Extract 5k, in which the infancy of social work is entwined with talk about the difficulty in transferring ideas from the UK to China).

One of the main achievements of Chapter Four is to show that there is not just one way in which success is performed. Looking at the range of interpretative repertoires drawn upon in constructing and performing success is useful because it illuminates complexity and challenges understandings of success in international development and definitions of or criteria for success. Similarly, Chapter Five showed the variety of discursive moves that produce authority in different ways. Another example of how information is only the case in certain

interactional contexts was around the nature of an effective working relationship with institutions. In some moments of communication Xorg was in a close relationship with child welfare institutions (e.g. in Extracts 6f and 6g, in which this was associated with building trust in order to gain access later or obtain information) and in other moments of communication it was important to maintain distance (e.g. in Extract 5j, in which this was part of a display of what was culturally appropriate).

Some of the most important insights that this kind of research can deliver arise from focusing attention back onto what is important to social actors in their interactions at a micro level, and at how this affects and has implications for the generation of knowledge about wider issues such the status of the development of foster care in China and what an effective working relationship with existing institutions requires.

My approach – which has made use of variation, contradictions, the unintentional and what is not unidirectional – has generated an interpretation of the data that has retained, rather than analysing away, some of the disorientation resulting from the clash between different pictures painted at different times. My study illuminates Xorg's awkwardness and discomfort. The data are made up of justifications for why Xorg is there and what it is doing. Depending on the interactional context, these take a range of forms, and my study shows how wide-ranging the accounts can be. At times, Xorg was transforming child welfare in China, and at other times there was considerable

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uncertainty, visible in some of the data extracts (especially interviews between E and members of Xorg staff other than the director). Some of the data show actors working with conflicting ideas about global knowledge and culturally specific or relative knowledge (Extract 5c).

I have highlighted the dependence of the organisation on the creation of cultural binaries that it then bridges. Xorg constructed difference between the UK and China in order for the organisation to be needed and for its solution to be suitable, and in order to show that it had done a lot of work, to overcome that difference. Xorg also needed to have 'the knowledge' in order to have authority.

The above finding illuminates a predicament for those undertaking 'cross-cultural' or international work, especially in this field of child welfare which relates to social work. One of the values underlying any kind of social work compels a response to the local context. As I have demonstrated, particularly in Chapter Six, the cultural context is not fixed, and what the cultures are in any 'cross-cultural work' is constantly being worked out, and the context is being constructed. I have looked at how people perform being actors in international-development activity related to social work, and I have shown that what was happening in one arena was not simply actors responding to the local context. Of significance to practice on the ground is how those actors constructed the cultural context they were responding to as they depicted their place within it. In my research, the nature of the cultural context was intertwined with Xorg's

identity work around knowing what to do within it. Extract 6b was illustrative of how the cultural context was constructed through the making of cultural distinctions and entangled with Xorg's knowing what to do in relation to them. This finding is of significance for international social work because practitioners are not just doing cultural translation, but cultural construction.

My analysis of the building and bridging of binaries illuminates some consequences of the ways in which indigenous and global, or western, expertise are constructed. My thesis has shown in detail some of the complications that confront attempts to transplant Western knowledge into indigenous contexts. Ways of talking, such as the interpretative repertoire *the UK and China are culturally very different*, together with the idea of Western experts having 'the knowledge' to transfer, may make 'cross-cultural' work difficult as that combination of ideas requires changing things while not changing them. That way of acting may also not leave adequate room for indigenous expertise and knowledge and the generation of new knowledge. This study has indicated the struggles that are involved in generating ways forward interactively. My analysis of Extract 6c suggested how knowledge production is dynamic, messy and ongoing, and that social interactions are central.

The overarching tension visible in the data resonates with the clash between an approach that draws heavily on the idea of global or universal knowledge and perhaps has colonial or imperialist overtones, and one that is uncomfortable with such an idea. My approach has made both of these visible at a micro level.

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My research shows that the difficulty of Xorg's task in fact came in part not so much from the precarious position of INGOs operating in child welfare in China as is suggested by the literature discussed in Chapter One (according to which it would be hard to do anything at all), as from having to wrestle with conflicting ideas about what the organisation could achieve, how it could achieve this, and its role.

On the one hand, Xorg told others what to do and represented itself as knowing what others should do. These representations encompassed depictions of the organisation's approach that resonated with the idea of the colonial gaze, and others that incorporated more 'right-on' ideas, especially that of 'empowerment'. A borderline colonialist or imperialist approach was most visible in the story in which Xorg was breaking into new international territories (Chapter 4) and in the organisation's facilitation of evangelical Christian missionary work (Chapter Six). The colonial gaze was also visible in other ways too, however. The interpretative repertoire *the knowledge exists as a globally transferable product* furnished Xorg with the attribute of having the right ideas. The conception of global knowledge, and the implication that Xorg had it, meant that Xorg's knowledge was represented as the right knowledge. The construction of expert professional identities and moral authority were heavily dependent on the idea of knowledge as a product. Given that 'global knowledge' is Euro-North American knowledge, this involved China being positioned as having to accept Euro-North American standards. Other approaches to knowledge were undermined, and an imposition of external

ideas was disguised as a morally sound transfer of the right knowledge. Stances on knowledge were entwined with moral authority. There was some taking of the moral high ground in that there was a degree of self-vindication in some of the organisational literature, in which morality justified actions as simply the right thing to do. Drawing on the interpretative repertoire *the knowledge exists as a globally transferable product* meant that Xorg could claim that it had this product, that it had something special to offer. This also meant that it could be depicted as able to empower people with this product. In other contexts this interpretative repertoire was also used to allow Xorg to retain authority in the face of not knowing where to start and in the face of language barriers. Both the moral, culturally imperialist depiction, and the depiction of empowerment, ultimately involve Xorg enlightening others in regard to what to do for children in state care, and both are in some ways condescending. While reference was made to 'assisting the Chinese', few actions demonstrated a belief in the ability of the people in China to tackle the problems of child welfare there. Returning responsibility to the Chinese, in language such as 'it's their project' and 'they're running it' happened as a defensive move when Xorg's claims about its own work were being challenged. The influence of the idea of development as a strategic intervention was visible.

On the other hand, sensitivity to and discomfort with imperialist or colonial images and ideas was also visible in the data, as were understandings of both global and local knowledge. Some of the individuals from the UK made remarks that detracted from the status of UK practices, such as talking about

inadequacies in social work in the UK resulting in many children being 'unhealthy', while elevating the asset of the right values in Chinese society. It was suggested that the UK had 'a ton to learn from China'. Being informed about cultural difference was an important part of the performance of identities. Knowledge of cultural difference was valued (Chapter Six). The importance attributed to knowledge of the local cultural context varied, but there was some suggestion that Xorg staff and workers in institutions in fact developed new knowledge together in the training courses.

My reading of the data suggests that it was desperately important for there to be emanating from Xorg a constant message that Xorg was highly successful and able to handle whatever was presented. What Xorg was saying about being an INGO in child welfare in China was in contrast to what else is known about how difficult it is. Xorg's experience was represented in a particular way. In this study I have not compared what people were saying they were doing and what they were 'really' doing. Nevertheless, the creation of what Xorg was seen to be doing was an important activity in itself, which possibly silenced representations of the complexities found in practical work. I am suggesting that it is of concern for policy and practice that the resources the organisation spends in activities around being seen to be successful and competent could be as important as those spent on thinking about training content and practice. Reflection on what was performed in the actions of staff during my fieldwork period suggests that, for example, trying to convince others that they understood the cultural context was possibly more important than

understanding the cultural context. The extent to which the speakers and authors of texts were concerned about the organisation's appearance perhaps indicated their preoccupation with the wider context as one in which the organisation and its staff, especially management, would be judged by appearances, leading to an overwhelming concern with reputation. This possibly creates a heavy burden for individuals such as B. What is expected of organisations, and a pressure to provide constant performances of success, could reduce the organisation's capacity for sensible and realistic work. There are also implications for future change. Possibly there was little motivation for Xorg to work in a different way because it was so concerned about being seen to know what to do.

My study has indicated that attention and energy were often spent on representing idealised outcomes and transformational results. It is possible that these depictions of the work helped Xorg to continue operating and to do whatever it did achieve, whether or not its achievements were transformative. My study has not evaluated Xorg's work, however the tensions I have observed beg the question of whether resources are diverted from small, solid steps of incremental change and whether the development of skills in selling the work as transformative go with a depletion of the resources and leadership qualities needed to operate effectively in other ways more directly linked to practice. The emphasis on performing transformation could also be resulting in some disorientation and loss of perspective on the role of Xorg. My study did not evaluate Xorg, but the likelihood is that it was neither an extraordinary force

revolutionising provision for children in state care throughout China and beyond, nor a hopeless case unable to provide support to workers in institutions. Although exceptional in its field of work in child welfare in China, in which relatively few INGOs operate, in contrast with other countries, Xorg could in fact be rather ordinary in its practices and struggles and in the limited nature of what it can feasibly accomplish, given its own limited resources and the political context. More applied research is required on what could free up organisations to take considered and measured action on specific aspects of their work, and to be able openly to tackle manageable and realistic tasks in a dependable and reliable way, without the fear of shame or inadequacy from lack of transformative social change. What I saw in terms of the number of trips and the nature of the trips to institutions indicated that, during my fieldwork period at least, involvement with the work in institutions was somewhat ad hoc, which would be in line with the impression given by literature discussed in Chapter One. Xorg's depictions of its long-term programme of work indicate another tension around whether the work is ad hoc or not, and what the implications of that might be.

The way that the organisation's work was depicted often silenced complexity, as difficulties were obscured and challenges downgraded. Most importantly, there was a lack of debate on the kind of care that should be provided and on the practical problems of introducing a form of foster care similar to that in the UK, which appeared to have not been adapted for China as much as other models, such as group homes. The interpretative repertoire *every child needs a*

family affords moral authority. However it is also idealistic and its surety does not leave room for different models and theories relating to provision for children in state care. Xorg's having the right ideas silenced debate about all the different forms of care, and what other organisations were doing and why, including all the challenges they confronted, as discussed in Chapter One. I am suggesting that the framing of the organisation's work as a 'simple mission' (e.g. Extract 4c), and the certainty that implies, means that that it may then be difficult to consider practical problems or local circumstances in sufficient depth. The way of describing foster-family life in which *love is transformative* may also militate against addressing/talking about addressing practical problems on the ground. Language such as that in the 'miracle of love' case study (Extract 5d (c)) implies that a range of wider benefits for all involved are somehow inherent to foster care. While talking about the organisation as contributing to huge numbers of placements functions to build up the status of the organisation, it does not, by itself, make the organisation effective, and closes down debate. The moral case studies (Extracts 5d (a) – 5d (d)) perhaps had benefits for the organisation's work, such as attracting supporters. Nevertheless, it is questionable as to whether it is in the children's own interests or in the wider interests of social change for the children to be represented as passive, and for the orphanage staff to be represented as lacking agency, in order to boost the importance of Xorg. Children are not passive but active participants in processes of social change (Montgomery 2008).

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The way moral authority was constructed also silenced debate. For example, the interpretative repertoire *it is better to praise than to criticise* established moral authority and silenced questions (Extract 5a). At other times moral authority was constituted from simplicity and by not paying attention to complexity. Many of the representations of the work, especially the representations of 'good' and 'bad' development and the moral case studies, appear simplistic. The case studies, in particular, functioned to generate an imperative to act, while making the rationale for the particular approach difficult to question. It was very important to have the right ideas and the right approach. Under this pressure, there was little space to acknowledge mistakes and to talk about uncertainties. There was an avoidance of the subject of social-work practice, whether in a highly contained performance (such as in the limited discussion of words in Extract 6b), or in data in which the discussion develops. Examples of the latter are seen where E and B produce an account which diverts to values in Chinese society (Extract 6e), and where E and S produce an account that resolves the problem of translating materials with the depiction of an exploratory training process with trainees (Extract 6c).

Often, already having the right ideas and the right approach meant the question of how to do the work had been answered in advance. This was one disadvantage of the idea of knowledge as a globally transferable product.

Another was that the organisation's task was very difficult to do, as the transfer of global knowledge is a form of imposition, and this generated a burden for staff (Extract 5k). Many of the texts I have analysed, whether organisational

publicity or interviews in which the performance for E of knowing what to do in China was prioritised, might be expected not to contain detail about problems encountered in the work. My data also show, however, that it is possible for staff to retain authority through performances in which they have a commanding oversight of the issues and the work and can also discuss difficulties and uncertainties (Chapter Five). It is of significance that a large proportion of my data minimised talk about practical problems and how to tackle them. The impact of the transformation of complexity into simplicity, in regard to children's lives and professional practice, is troubling. Making more space for uncertainty could enhance the work.

Xorg staff did find some ways to voice issues of complexity and to reopen ways of addressing that complexity. The complexity of development and the perspectives of others were touched on more in the interviews between E and H and, especially, E and S. Firstly, staff drew on the idea that it was important to be sensitive to different cultures, drawing, for example, on the interpretative repertoire *for things to work well it is necessary to be sensitive*. Responsiveness became important in these moments. These rather vague suggestions of delicacy were in fact a means by which a different way of working was gradually being developed, and clashed with many uses of the idea of the globally transferable product. Secondly, staff were able to articulate problems by representing them as caused by their own personal inadequacies. This was shown in statements from S and H such as 'I am learning' or that they personally needed 'to be more thoughtful' (Chapter 5). With the construction of

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their own personal burdens, actors such as S and H resisted some of the colonial or imperialist overtones visible elsewhere. These two ways of voicing complexity were in contrast to the claims of transformation. Many of the depictions of the organisation's work did not leave room for gradual and incremental change. The gap between policy and practice appeared to be stressful for some staff.

Final reflections

My study has analysed the construction of Xorg through the depictions of its activities by members of staff. This has been valuable in demonstrating what actors understood was important in their work and in relationships with others. My study has not examined the actions of those with whom Xorg interacted and analysing the actions of, especially the claiming of power by, those whom development projects are purported to assist is an important aspect of current work in development studies (Lewis and Mosse 2006). The strengths of my study lie in the way I have brought together ethnographic and discourse analytic methods to examine social interactions at a micro level and in the way I located myself, the researcher, in the thesis, which was connected to analysis of E's performances in the generation of the data. Finally, I shall point the way forward to future research in terms of both methodological and empirical work.

Firstly, future work could explore further the synthesis of ethnographic and discourse analytic work that I have attempted in this thesis. I have argued that these approaches are complementary. This is in accordance with the theoretical

framework I have used for my research, which involves acknowledging that modes of social action, such as discourse and narrative, each have their own form and thus require appropriate methods to analyse them (Atkinson, Delamont et al. 2008). Nevertheless, the familiar and well-known styles of ethnographic and discourse analytic methods are sharply contrasting and present researchers with a challenge in the form of bringing these methods together in a synthesis that does not have tones of incongruity or disharmony.

Ethnographic and discourse analytic approaches are potentially disharmonious because accounts based on these different methods often have a different feel, different characteristics and are of a different nature. Ethnographic research is an embodied form of research in which the researcher's self is used as an instrument. The personal experience of ethnographic fieldwork means that the emotions and identity issues of the researcher are prominent in the generation of the data and the researcher's needs and wants influence the study to a considerable extent (Coffey 1999). In addition, ethnographic accounts may provide more colour in regard to the key characters of the story and ethnographers generally attempt to bring the wider setting alive in the reader's mind. Some discourse analytic methods, including the synthetic model (Wetherell 1998) I have used, acknowledge the influence of the researcher on the data and encourage reflexivity on the part of the researcher. Nevertheless, the tone of discourse analytic research often has a more distanced feel than that of ethnographic research. Discourse analytic accounts are sometimes seen as being based on more boundaried, structured analysis and as being more

dispassionate than ethnographic tales. There is generally less emphasis on the characters in a social setting and more on the discursive context and the use of shared linguistic resources. While analysis may return to the specifics of one interview or one individual's roles in the social setting, the emphasis is on the patterns of language use across a dataset and is sometimes argued to be less personal than the depiction of individual characters in an ethnography.

One implication of my study for future research is the need for an exploration of ways of achieving true methodological synthesis. This synthesis could also incorporate methods to analyse the material, spatial, and sensory aspects of action in a social setting, in addition to discourse and narrative, within an ethnographic study.

Secondly, reflecting on the limitations of my own study highlights the importance of methodological developments that can embrace the richness of the data that can be generated in a multilingual setting. Generating and analysing data from a multilingual setting raises a number of challenges, which extend far beyond matters of suitable translation from one language to another. These challenges include capturing the complexity of the setting through the inclusion of different arenas of communication in which different groups of people interact in different languages, and considering and addressing potential issues presented by conducting discourse analysis on data produced by non-native speakers of the language being used and by speakers from different cultural backgrounds.

As was discussed in Chapter Three, I took steps to generate data with Xorg in a comprehensive manner. Nevertheless, due to a variety of reasons including the location of certain individuals, differing levels of rapport between me and members of staff, and my limited level of Mandarin language ability, some fields of communication are more prominent in this thesis than others. For example, informal office chit-chat in Mandarin was difficult to capture, and I was able to talk more easily with some members of staff than others.

In this study I conducted discourse analysis on materials generated in English by native and non-native speakers. As was explained in Chapter Three, the kind of discourse analysis I used involved the examination of sets of words, phrases and expressions, rather than syntax, my approach was concerned with what people were doing discursively when they talked, and I acknowledged the issues presented by investigating the use of shared linguistic resources by speakers of different cultural backgrounds. These matters are complex, however, and possibilities for future work include further exploration of the analysis of the use of language in communication with or between non-native speakers and speakers from different cultural backgrounds. In this thesis I have emphasised what happens in interactions rather than comparing the way members of different groups communicate, including non-native speakers of English with different first languages. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the impact of some aspects of cultural background on communication. For example, Scollon and Scollon, in their work on professional

communication in English between westerners and Chinese people, identify four aspects of culture which are significant for understanding discourse: ideology, socialisation, forms of discourse and face systems (Scollon and Scollon 2007a). Ideology includes ideas about history and worldview. It is suggested that awareness of a long history and the use of references to such, or a tendency to de-emphasise historical heritage and to demonstrate keeping up-to-date with world changes, on the part of different groups, may influence the speed of negotiations (Scollon and Scollon 2007a p. 141). Another example of an aspect of culture that affects communication is beliefs about kinship. These include ideas about the impact of hierarchy and collectivistic relationships in contrast to egalitarianism and individualism, which may have consequences for how people express politeness and how people act in a group. Similarly, how much weight different people give to the relationship and information functions of language has an impact on negotiations and group harmony (Scollon and Scollon 2007a).

The multilingual nature of the setting is significant in its own terms and demands an examination of the systems of language use in that setting, which would not be concerned only with translation between languages, but with action through talk in that setting. It would be beneficial to address further the challenges that come from foregrounding the use of language in the investigation of a multilingual setting. Further work could be done to develop the analytical framework that I have used in this study to encompass more of the complexity presented by a multilingual setting. Future studies could profit

from the richness of the way language is used and the unique patterns of language use in a particular multilingual setting.

Thirdly, my study demonstrates the need for further exploration of the concept of international social work and the tension between locally produced and international, generic training in social work. It supports work that is examining the epistemologies on which social work theory and practice around the world are based (Gray, Coates et al. 2008a). While located in the context of the development of social work in China and the difficulties around the professionalisation of social work in that country (Tong, Keung et al. 2009), and in the context of the challenging political climate and regulatory structure for INGOs in China (Hsia and White 2002), as was outlined in Chapter One, my study has brought attention back to what international actors in child welfare in China understand themselves to be doing.

Finally, while claims of transformation were made in the identity work performed in the discursive construction of the organisation, my study of the discursive context is in fact a reminder of the slow and difficult process that is social change. My research has implications for understanding social change in the field of international development, not least as it supports other work that shows that a development organisation is not one fixed entity (Hilhorst 2003). I have demonstrated that there is merit in applying theoretical and methodological approaches from the field of identity studies, especially the

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

construction of moral actors, discussed in Chapters Two and Three, to the study of development and INGOs.

Appendix One: List of Individuals

Many individuals had complex and sometimes international backgrounds. I have given a broad indication of cultural background, country of origin/formative years, and languages spoken

A – PR and Communications Manager

(Chinese from China; Mandarin as a first language and English as a working language)

B – Director

(British from UK; English as a first language)

D – Finance Manager

(Chinese from China; Mandarin as a first language and English as a working language)

F – Training Team Administrator

(Chinese from China; Mandarin as a first language and English as a working language)

H – Training Officer

(Chinese from China; Mandarin as a first language and English as a working language)

M – Physiotherapist who left about a month before the end of my fieldwork

(British from UK; English as a first language)

MR – Physiotherapist who replaced M

(Chinese from Hong Kong, China; English and Cantonese as first languages and Mandarin as a working language)

N – Finance Assistant

(Chinese from China; Mandarin as a first language and English as a working language)

R – Operations Manager

(British from UK; English as a first language and some knowledge of Mandarin)

S – Training Manager

(Chinese from China; Mandarin as a first language and English as a working language)

Y – Receptionist

(Chinese from China; Mandarin as a first language and English as a working language)

C – Training Officer (based in a different city with J)

(Chinese from China; Mandarin as a first language)

J – Projects Manager (based in a different city with C)

(Chinese from China; Mandarin as a first language and English as a working language)

P – Fundraising Manager (based in UK)

(British from UK; English as a first language)

In addition, K joined mid-fieldwork as a consultant (British from UK, English as a first language) and O, U and X from the China Social Work Association were

based in the office part time from mid-fieldwork (Chinese from China;
Mandarin as a first language).

E is me/'Intern'/'Researcher'

(British from UK; English as a first language and some knowledge of Mandarin)

W is a representative of a current funder (at the time of the fieldwork) of Xorg

(British from UK; English as a first language)

... ..
... ..

Appendix Two: Transcription Symbols

[...]	material deliberately omitted
[text]	inserted text for clarification
[Xorg] [B] [name]	insertion to replace identifying information, listed in Appendix One where appropriate
<u>text</u>	speaker emphasis

Punctuation is used for ease of reading.

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